

16-1-2-32

SERMONS

PREACHED AT

Cheshunt in Hertfordshire

FOR THE

Benefit of YOUNG PEOPLE,

By the late REVEREND

Mr. JOHN OAKES.

Published at the Desire of his Friends,

By JOHN MASON, A. M.



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, THE
DEDICATION.

To the young People who stated-
ly attend on my Ministry at
C H E S H U N T.

My dear YOUNG FRIENDS,



T was with Pleasure I
entered upon the Office
assigned me, soon after
Providence had called me
to this Place, of Trans-
cribing the following Discourses for the

A 2

Press,

Prefs, in Hopes of doing thereby some Service to your Souls ; as the reading of them may, by the Blessing of God, be a means of reviving those serious Impressions on your Minds which, I doubt not, some of you felt in hearing them. Not to say that it may reasonably be expected that the just Value and Esteem you had for your late worthy Minister the Rev^d. Mr. *Oakes* will engage your ready Attention to the ensuing Instructions, which he so earnestly recommended to you when living, and which he now, as it were, repeats to you from the Dead.

You cannot, I am persuaded, soon forget with what kind condescending Language he often sued for your Hearts in the Name of God, in what a soft affectionate Manner he besought you, and with what a Variety of plain and striking Arguments he urged you to de-
vote

vote yourselves to God, and mind the Welfare of your precious Souls betimes. O, that the holy Spirit of God, by these Discourses, and by all the Means of Religion you enjoy, would frequently renew those holy Impressions on your Hearts, and make them still more deep and durable!

Had it pleased God to continue the Author's Life and Health, it was his Design to have published these Sermons himself for your Benefit; and by a Passage in his last Will his Friends were expressly permitted to make them Publick, if they thought proper; by which they were more readily induced to do it, notwithstanding the great Number of useful and pious Books of this Sort the World is already furnished with. But there is so great a Difference in the Stile, Taste, and Turn of Authors, in their Manner of conveying Instruc-

tions, and the Light in which they set the same important Truths ; and at the same Time, so great a Variety of Temper, Taste, Complexion, and Capacity in Readers, that it is highly probable that some Authors may make deeper Impressions on some Minds than others. And this I think is a sufficient Reason, in some Cases for Authors to write on the same Subjects, which others have professedly treated before.

As for the ensuing Discourses, the Reader is to expect nothing in them to gratify his Curiosity ; But the Substantial and Important Truths they contain, the plain and easy Stile in which they are delivered, and the serious and pious Spirit they breathe, adapt them very properly for the Impression of younger Minds. The Part I have had in fitting them for Publick View, has been

been little more than that of a mere Transcriber; having been scrupulously cautious of making any Alteration in the Phrase unless where some little Inaccuracies had escaped the Author, which upon the Revival, I am Satisfied he would himself have corrected.

And now, my young Friends, I leave the whole to the Blessing of God, and your own serious and attentive Thoughts; in humble Hopes, that if the Perusal of these Sermons do but revive in your Hearts those pious Impressions which they were so solicitously intended to fix there, they will, by the Divine Blessing, be a Means of guarding your tender Minds against the Influence of Earthly Vanities, of forming in you the true Temper and Spirit of Christianity, and of making you *useful in this World, and happy in a better*: the great End we should always keep in Eye;
and

and which is the hearty Prayer of
One who is devoted to the Service
of your Souls, and sincerely wishes
your everlasting Welfare.

3 NO 63

Chebbunt Jan. 2,

1746-7.

J. MASON.

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3 NO 63





The Pleasantness of a Religious Life.

S E R M O N I.

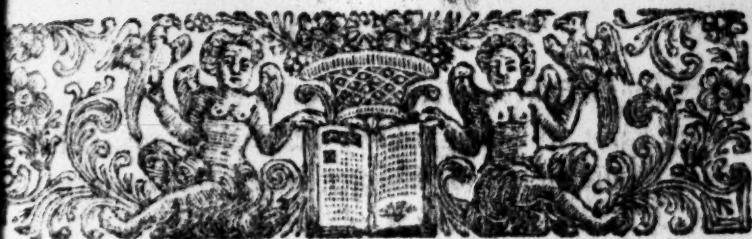
P R E A C H E D

M A Y 30, 1731.





MAY 30 1731.



PROV. iii. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, And all
her Paths are Peace.*

 **A**MONG many other Arguments to recommend Religion to the Love and Practice of Mankind, this, of *Solomon* in the Text, taken from the *Pleasantness* of it should, one would think, have a very great Influence on the Minds of Men; and especially on the Minds of younger Persons, who are usually devoted to Pleasure, and fond of every thing that goes under that Name; and to whom I had a particular Regard in the Choice of this Subject, and would willingly direct their Thoughts to the purest, the noblest, and most lasting Pleasures.

It is a very great Mistake, my Friends, if any of you imagine that a Course of Religion is a sad and melancholy Thing, and that if once you embrace it you must bid farewell to all the Pleasures of Life. This is the suggestion of the great Enemy of Souls to affrighten your Feet from the Ways of God. And if his Emissaries give out

the same false Representation of a holy Life, they deserve not to be regarded ; since they manifestly speak Evil of those Things *which they know not.* *But Wisdom is justified of her Children.* The Sons of Wisdom know, from their own happy Experience, the utter Falshood of such a Suggestion ; and the Reason and Nature of Things concur to confirm the contrary Testimony ; and to satisfy us, that, as the Children of Wisdom do assert, so in truth it must be (and cannot be otherwise,) that *the Ways of Wisdom are INDEED Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Paths of Peace.*

† It is generally supposed that by the Term *Wisdom*, in this Book of *Proverbs* and in this Chapter particularly, *Solomon* means *Religion* ; the Fear of God, and a Course of dutiful Obedience to his Commandments : as indeed this is the highest, the truest Wisdom in the World ; and no Folly is comparable to that of Sin. For which Reason the Sinner is constantly throughout this Book represented under the Character of a Fool. Wisdom, true Wisdom, will always lead Men to Religion ; as it teaches them to behave themselves agreeably to what is right, and just, and fit ; to act agreeably to the Nature of Things, and so as may best secure their final, their eternal Interests ; which can no other Way be done but by a Course of Religion and Godliness. Whereas the Fool, that is the Sinner, Acts contrary to the Nature of Things, to the Reason of his Mind, to
the

the Design of his Creation, and so as at length, and in the final Issue of Things, will prove destructive to himself.

Religion therefore is the only Wisdom. And it is this which *Solomon* so repeatedly, so vehemently recommends; and he uses a great Variety of Considerations to engage us to the Love and Practice of it. In verse 13, of this Chapter he pronounces that Man happy *that findeth Wisdom, and getteth Understanding*; declaring (*ver. 14, 15.*) that *the Merchandise of her is better than that of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold; that she is more precious than Rubies: and all the Things* (the very best Things) *this World can afford are not to be compared unto her. Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour, ver. 16.* And then He proceeds in the Text to add farther concerning her, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.*

It will therefore be my Business to recommend a Religious Life to you, and particularly to younger Persons, from these two Considerations in the Text.—*That the Ways of Wisdom, or Religion, are Ways of Pleasantness:—and that all her Paths are Paths of Peace.*—These two Considerations indeed have a great Affinity with each other; *Peace* being one great Spring of *Pleasure*, and *Pleasure* promoting *Peace*. But, as they are not precisely the same, it may be more useful to consider them apart.

I. It is here asserted that the Ways of Wisdom, or of true Religion, are *Ways of Pleasantness*: Or do administer true and solid Pleasure to them that walk in them. They are (ὁδοὶ καλὰι, as the Septuagint render the Words, Viæ pulchræ) beautiful, agreeable Ways, fair and excellent, and such as are delightful to the Traveller's View.

Before I enter upon the direct Proof of this assertion, it may be proper to make one or two Remarks by way of Explication and Concession; which may serve to direct you to the true Meaning of *Solomon* in the Passage, and be a kind of *Caveat* against the Objections that may be apt to rise in your Minds against the Truth of it.

1. *The Pleasure here principally meant is that of the Mind.* It is not the mere Mirth of the Countenance, or the loud *Laughter of Fools*, which, *what does it?* as the wise Man elsewhere speaks, Eccles. ii. 2. What good does it? It is a Blaze, and soon over and past. No! as the Mind is the principal Seat of Wisdom, so it is the Mind which chiefly partakes of those Joys which Religion administers; though when the Mind is pleased the Countenance of the Body will be easy, and more disposed to innocent Chearfulness and Mirth; which are by no Means inconsistent with the strictest Religion, but very much befriended by it. No Persons in the World have so much Reason to be chearful and joyful, as the
true

true Sons of Wisdom. See *Eccles. ix. 7.* *Go thy Way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart; for God now accepteth thy Works.* On the contrary, *Laughter is not seemly for a Fool.* The Sons of Vice and Irreligion have no Ground to be merry; and their Mirth will soon end in deadly Sorrow.

2. *It is granted too that the Ways of Wisdom are not altogether so Pleasant as to be absolutely free from all Manner of Difficulty and Trouble.* Our blessed Saviour himself spake of Religion under the Metaphor of a *strait Gate*, and a *narrow Path leading to Life*, *Mat. vii. 13, 14.*

It cannot be denied that we are depraved and corrupted Creatures, and have too much Aversion to that which is good rooted in our Natures. And our Appetites and Passions are apt to be Headstrong; to lead us away in despite of the Calls of Reason, and the Remonstrances of our superiour Faculties, the Understanding and Judgment. And, moreover, we are situated in the midst of Snares and Temptations, and have a Number of ill Examples before our Eyes to lead us aside: (not to speak now on the Head of Persecution for the sake of Religion) And since this is the Case; and these our unhappy Circumstances; it must be a Matter of some Difficulty, at first especially, to bend our Course contrary to the Stream of corrupt Inclinations, to restrain and bridle impetuous Affections, and to escape the Influence of bad Examples.

But

But as these Difficulties are chiefly such as attend us when we are first setting out in *Wisdom's Ways*, and will gradually lessen upon our Hands as we proceed and go on in our Work; so also (as is said in another Case, *Labor ipse Voluptas*) the very Labour and Difficulty we sustain in this Case is not without its Pleasure: as we are persuaded we are acting a wise, a reasonable, and necessary Part; and as the Divine Grace will not be wanting to assist and encourage our Souls in these Conflicts with Sin and Sense. How great a Paradox soever it may appear to some Persons, yet it is certainly a much greater Pleasure to restrain a criminal Inclination than it is to indulge and gratify it; to be *singularly* religious than it is to follow a *Multitude* to do Evil.

3. It must be owned too that the *Ways of Wisdom* are not alike pleasant throughout to all Persons, and at all Times. It must be confessed that some Parts and Duties of Religion are not so Pleasant as others are. The Exercises of *Repentance*, for Instance, (which, though not originally belonging to Religion, are yet become a necessary Part of the Religion of Sinners; these I say,) are not to be supposed equally pleasant with the Exercises of Love to God, Celebration of his Praises, or doing Acts of kindness to Men. And so the Comparison might be made between other Parts and other various Instances of Religion.

But

But though they are not all alike pleasant, yet none of them are altogether void of Pleasure. That bitter Thing Repentance itself, and the Exercise of a godly Sorrow for our Sins, hath its Pleasure and its Joy attending it: (*est quædam fieri Voluptas.*) And good Men have confessed and felt, that one penitent Tear for Sin hath yielded more Satisfaction and true Pleasure to their Souls than all the Delights of a Sinful Life.

And as the Ways of Wisdom are not all alike pleasant in themselves, so neither are they so to all Persons equally, and at all Times. For the great Difference there is in Men's Bodily Constitutions, and in their Circumstances in Life, will unavoidably occasion a Difference also in their several Relishes of the Pleasures of Religion. A Constitution tinged with Melancholy is not, in the Nature of Things, capable of deriving as much and as constant Delight and Refreshment from the Fountains of Wisdom, as another that does not labour under that unhappy Cast of Mind. And some good Persons may be exercised with such sore Afflictions in the World as may prevent in some Measure that *Joy in the Lord*, and Pleasure in the Services of Religion, which the more happy and comfortable Circumstances of others enable them to perceive and take in.

But these Things will not in the least overthrow the assertion of *Solomon*, that indeed *the Ways of Wisdom are Ways of Pleasantness*, though they

they are not alike so in *all Parts*, nor to *all Persons*, at *all Times*.

Having made these few Remarks and Concessions relating to this Head, I shall now attempt a more direct Proof of the Truth of it. And here a Variety of Considerations might be suggested, and we might by various Ways and different Arguments represent and illustrate this Assertion of the wise Man. I might prove this to you from the Testimony of God in his Word, who hath frequently asserted the same Thing in many Passages of the Divine Revelation we are favoured with. I might produce the concurring Testimonies of good Men, who from Age to Age have born Witness to this sacred Truth, and handed it down to succeeding Generations, as the Matter of their solemn Experience. But I will content myself with singling out and presenting four Arguments for this Purpose taken from the Nature of Religion itself; from whence it will appear that a Course of Religion and Piety must (ordinarily at least) be attended with Pleasure and Delight. Let us then consider Religion in the following Views of it, in all which it cannot be otherwise than pleasant to the Soul.

(1.) Religion may be considered under this View, *as a Course of Devotedness to God*. What is Religion but a yielding of ourselves to God, and glorifying Him *with our Souls and with our Bodies, which are his?* The Apostle Paul gives a very fit Description of it in that Account of himself,

Acts xxvii. 23.—God (saith he) *whose I am and whom I serve.* See also Rom. xiv. 7, 8. Where the same Apostle speaks of it by *living and dying unto the Lord.*

This is the Heart of Religion; This is Religion itself: the grand Principle that runs through the whole Scheme of Religion. Now certainly there is nothing in all the World that can admit of equal Pleasure to the Soul, as such a Course of *Devotedness to God.* We consider the Perfections of his Nature, the infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness and other Attributes of the supreme Being, and observe how fit and suitable an Object God is of our Veneration, Trust, Love and Obedience. And the Soul under the Influence of this Consideration, yields itself with fullest Satisfaction and Complacency to God. And the great God is not only venerable on Account of the glorious Perfections he is possessed of, but stands also in such Relations to us, and hath done such great Things (and will yet do greater,) for us, as lay us under the strongest Engagements to consecrate ourselves to him. He is our *Creator*; his Hands formed us and *not we ourselves.* He breathed into us the *Breath of Life*, and made us *living Souls.* He is therefore our *Owner*, and hath an unalienable Propriety in us, and a Right to command and dispose of us. His Hands bestow unnumbered *Benefits* upon us in the Course of his Providence. We altogether live upon the Provisions of his Bounty, and have,
daily

daily Experiences of his Care and tender Regards to us. And as he hath *redeemed* us by the Blood of his Son, he hath acquired a fresh Title to our Homage and Obedience. It is therefore a most reasonable and fitting Thing for us to devote ourselves to God. And it cannot be done without a Pleasure attending it, arising from the Consciousness of the Fitness of the Action in itself, and of the advantageous Consequences of it to us. We perceive that as *of him are all Things*, so *to him* all Things should be: And he that is the *first Cause*, should be the *last End* of all.

Do we not evidently belong to him that made us? And whom should we love and serve but him that gave us Being? And since his Will is always directed by Wisdom and Goodness, we may most chearfully comply with it, and chuse to be absolutely governed by it. And when we have devoted ourselves to God, God will regard us as his own. His Almighty Power will defend us, his unerring Wisdom guide and direct us, his boundless Goodness supply our Wants, and his Eternity be the Measure of our Happiness. We are then eased of every Care, but this single one of endeavouring to please God; casting our other Cares on him who careth for us. And when such happy Fruits derive from a Devotedness to God, must it not fill the Soul with Pleasure, Satisfaction, and Joy? O, that I could perswade you, my young Friends especially, to try the Experiment! Solemnly consecrate yourselves to God

this

this Way, and live a Life of Devotedness to him in Piety and Virtue; and I dare promise you such Pleasure and Satisfaction in such a Course of Life, as you can never attain to any other Way. You will feel that you act most agreeably to Reason and Wisdom; that this is the wisest and best Course you could possibly take. Your Consciences will applaud your Conduct; and the great God whom you serve will lift up the Light of his Countenance upon you, and spread a Joy through all the Powers of your Souls: a Joy which Strangers in these Things intermeddle not with.—And thus you see that in this View of Religion, as it consists in a Course of Devotedness to God, it must be a Way of solid Pleasure, Satisfaction, and Content.

(2.) A Life of Religion is not only a Devotedness to God, but it mainly consists in an *Imitation of God*: an Imitation of the *Moral Perfections* of his Nature; and upon this Account must administer Pleasure and Delight.

The great God is not only the supreme and best of all Beings, but he is the happiest Being. He is the *Blessed God*; and enjoys an infinite and overflowing Abundance of Delight, Joy and Happiness within Himself: a Happiness so great that it cannot be augmented, and so necessary and secure that it cannot be diminished. In proportion therefore as any Creature bears the Image, or is cast into the Resemblance of God, so much of that Happiness and Pleasure must he possess.

Now it is very evident that the principal Part of Religion lies in an Imitation of our God. So that the good Man is said to be made a *Partaker of the Divine Nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. And we are commanded to be *Followers of God as dear Children*, Eph. v. 1. To be *holy as God is holy*, 1 Pet. i. 16. To be *perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, Mat. v. last. And to put on *that new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. And can it be supposed that the Imitation of the *Blessed God* should be without Pleasure! Impossible; it cannot be in the very Nature of Things. While we tread in the Footsteps of Deity (as far as our present State admits of it) our Ways must be Ways of Pleasantness and Delight. The Habits and Exercises of Justice, Holiness, Truth and Goodness, must afford Satisfaction and Pleasure to the Soul. And by how much the higher our Attainments are in these Graces, so much the more pleasant and delightful will they be to our Souls.

Permit me therefore to recommend Religion to you, my young Friends, under this Notion of an *Imitation of God*. A Walk with God; walking (in some Measure) in the same Path that the Deity himself does: Setting the Lord always before you, and endeavouring to follow him, and attain a Likeness to him, in these Perfections of his Nature, from whence his Happiness principally results. And though indeed this will not

comprehend the whole of that Duty and Obedience which we, in our present Circumstances, owe to God; yet it is certainly the noblest Part of it, and that to which all the others may be considered but as Means to bring us. This is everlasting and immutable Religion: the Religion of all intelligent Beings whatsoever. Tho' our Sinfulness and Degeneracy hath made some other Things necessary to us, which are not properly Parts of Imitation of God, such as Repentance for Sin and the like; but these though necessary to us, are yet (as it were) but Steps to lead us to that which is *truly* Religion, in which the very Essence of it doth consist, even the direct *Imitation* of the supreme Being in the *moral Perfections* of his Nature. And this cannot possibly be without Delight. And this Delight will be continually growing and increasing upon our Hands, as we advance in the Paths of Holiness, and go forward in the Divine Life. And when we shall attain to the Perfection of Holiness and Goodness in the Heavenly World, then will our Joy be full and compleat.

(3.) A Course of Religion may be represented under this Notion also, as *acting agreeably to the dictates of our Consciences, and the Reason of our Minds*. And from such a Course there must arise an answerable Pleasure.

Corrupted as we are, yet we find within ourselves such a Principle as bears witness for God, and remonstrates against our Sins and Follies, and

the Violation of God's Laws. Our Consciences and the Judgement of our Minds are on the side of God and Religion. And the Sinner is *self-condemned*; hath something within him that pronounces him wicked and foolish, and raises Uneasiness in his Soul. But we approve ourselves and are pleased with ourselves when we act agreeably to the Laws of God. And so far as our Conduct is conformable to them, there is something within that whispers a secret Approbation; and our Reason and Conscience signify to us that we have done well.

All the Parts and Branches of Religion, respecting God, our Neighbour, or ourselves, are such as are evidently founded on the Nature and Relation of Things; and Reason and Conscience enforce the Observation of them, as Things which are right and fit, important and useful in themselves, as well as expressly enjoined by the Command of God: so that to live religiously is only to live according to the Directions of Conscience and the Reason of Things. And this cannot be without an answerable Pleasure attending it.

• I appeal to your own Experience upon this Head. When you have performed any good Thing, done any Thing which God requires, and will (you hope) be pleased with, have you not then had the Approbation of your own Mind and an inward Satisfaction and Sense of Joy? Hath it not been a Pleasure to you, to feel the

Testimony which your Conscience gave into you concerning the Wisdom and Fitness of such an Action? Whereas on the other Hand, when you were guilty of any wilful Transgression of the Divine Law; how have you been condemned by your own Minds! filled with Reproach and Uneasiness, and could hardly tell how to bear your own Thoughts, but have endeavoured to stifle and suppress them, and seek for Diversion and Company to put away the Remembrance of your Sin and Folly! And certainly a Life of Sin, whatever the Sinner may pretend to say to the contrary, and how profusely merry soever he may sometimes appear, must be a Life of great Uneasiness. For his Reason and his Conscience are continually molesting him, denouncing against him, and filling him with Fears, Remorse and Horror. And there is nothing so dreadful in all the World as Self-Condempnation. This we cannot flee from, nor by any Means avoid. Unless it may be for a while we lay our Reason asleep, by such brutish and violent Methods as only inflame our Guilt, and supply fresh Occasion for the Worm within to torment us more grievously afterward. But a Course of Religion is a Course of Pleasure, as in Consequence of our Obedience to the Dictates of it, our Reason and our Conscience acquiesce, and we go smoothly on without those inward Girdings of Mind, and severe Reproaches which attend the Paths of Sin and Wickedness. He that would seek for true and constant Pleasure

must please God and please his own Mind ; that is, in other Words, he must be truly Religious. And from hence will arise Delight, constant and unspeakable. Though as the best Men on Earth have Sins and Follies mingled with their Graces and Virtues, so their Joys will be proportionably interrupted and at Times broken in upon. But so far forth as they are Religious, and so long as they keep to the Ways of God, without deviating from them, they will have Pleasure and Joy. In Heaven alone *our Joy will be full.*

(4.) To be Religious is *to answer the chief Designs of our Creation, and to pursue the proper Ends we were made for.* And in this View of Religion it must be pleasant to the Soul.

We were made to glorify and enjoy God ; to be happy in his Love and Likeness in the Heavenly World. And when we apply ourselves to answer these Ends of our Being, there must be a proportionable Degree of Pleasure arising from such Endeavours, to our Souls.

Reasonable Creatures are so made, that the Pursuit of the Ends of their Being is connected with present Pleasure : and they cannot run contrary to the great Designs of their Creation, without feeling some inward Regret and Uneasiness.

We are sent into this World amidst a Number of our Fellow-Creatures round us ; and Reason and Revelation tell us, that the Design of our being cast into Society, is, that we may do all the Good we can in it, to the several Members thereof.

of with whom we have to do. When therefore we exercise ourselves in Acts of Righteousness and Mercy, when we take care to do no Harm or Wrong to our Neighbour, but, on the contrary, endeavour to help and relieve and do them Good in all Respects, according to our Capacities and Opportunities, there will be a Pleasure arising from this Branch of Religion; as it is the answering one End for which we were made, and serving the direct Purpose of our being cast into Society.

So also the improving our own Minds in the Knowledge of God and Divine Things, and the devout Worship of God in private and publick, with other Things of like Nature, will have their Pleasure attending them; both as they approve themselves to the Reason of our Minds, and as they have a Subserviency to promote the supreme End of our Beings, (*viz.*) the everlasting Enjoyment of God. We are made principally for another World; and he that forgets that future State that waits him beyond the Grave, and only busies himself to get, by all Means, the Riches and Honours of this present World, does in reality counter-act the Design of his Existence. As is also done by those who, forgetting that they have reasonable and intelligent Spirits within them, only lay out all their Care to feed and pamper, and please a dying Body.

In a Word, God hath made us for himself; and when our Designs and Actions correspond with

with the Intents of our Maker in calling us into Being, in endowing us with such Faculties, and in placing us in such a State as he hath done; then shall we feel a sacred Pleasure spreading itself through our Souls. Now it is by Religion only, a Course of Religion, whereby we can in any Means be said to answer the great Designs of our Existence; and from that, chiefly, must we therefore expect to derive our Pleasures. And that Pleasure which Men find in running counter to the Purposes of their Beings must be vain and delusory, unnatural and short-lived, and will be succeeded with Eternal Regret. Further,

(5.) Religion may be considered in this View also, as it is *a securing our greatest and most important Interests, those of our Souls and Eternity.* And in this Notion of it, it cannot fail of being pleasant and delightful.

Indeed Religion hath a Tendency to promote even our temporal Peace and Welfare; partly in its own Nature, and partly through the Divine Blessing which it draws down upon our Affairs. And excepting the Case of Persecution, the Religious Man hath greatly the Advantage of the Irreligious, even with respect to the Comforts of the present Life. But however, as the Concernments of our Souls, and our Eternal Interests, are of infinitely greater Moment and Consequence, than those that relate only to our Bodies, and this present World, where we are to be but for a little while; so it must yield unspeakably more Pleasure

sure to have the former well settled and adjusted, than to have the latter in good Case. Now it is certain that nothing but Religion, and a Course of Piety, can settle those our Eternal Interests upon a good Foot. Wickedness destroys the Soul, brings down upon it the Divine Displeasure; introduces Disorder and Confusion in all the Faculties of the Mind, and will at length issue in the total Loss of all Happiness. *The Soul that sinneth, it shall die. The Wages of Sin is Death. And the Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment. And where is the Hope of the Sinner when God taketh away his Soul?*——But the Soul of a good Man rests in Peace. He hath the Lord, the Lord Almighty, for his Father and everlasting Friend in Jesus Christ. He hath Habitations in Heaven, to which he will be shortly translated. And in the mean Time he may with *Patience possess his Soul*, amidst all the changing Scenes of Life. He need not be afraid of evil Tidings, *his Heart being fixed trusting in God*. If he should by any means lose his Earthly Treasures, he comforts himself with the Consideration of those heavenly *Treasures which can never be taken away from him*. He need not be afraid of those *who can only kill the Body*, since his Soul is far out of their Reach, and beyond the Power of their Malice to destroy.

In a Word, the good Man, when his Eternal Interests are secured, may pass through the varying Scenes of Life with Chearfulness, and may meet

meet the last Enemy, Death, with Hope and Triumph: and joyfully pass forward from one World to another, supported by the Hopes and Prospects which Religion, especially the Christian Religion, administers to him. And though it is not the Happiness of every good Person to be thus comfortably assured of the Safety of his most important Interests; yet where there is only a Probability of it, and a *good Hope through Grace*, that this is his Case, even this will administer no small Consolation: nor would he part with these his Hopes if he might have the Universe in exchange for them.

And would it not, my Friends, be a mighty Pleasure to you to have your best, your final, your everlasting Concernments thus comfortably settled to you? You cannot but perceive it would. You must, you do, wish they were so. The most profligate Wretches upon Earth are yet ready to say with *Balaam*, *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my latter End be like his*, Num. xxiii. 10. And sure, when we are designed to exist for ever, it must be an almost infinite Pleasure to the Soul to hope, on good Grounds, that *that* State of everlasting Existence will be happy to it. Especially if we have by our Sins, forfeited the Divine Favour, and rendered ourselves unworthy of Eternal Life; in such a Case, to find ourselves through Divine Grace, restored to the Hopes of his Favour, and of that Heaven we deserved to have been for ever excluded from,

this

this must yield a Pleasure to the Soul, which Words cannot well express. Religion therefore, which through Jesus Christ will raise us to such Hopes as these, and give us these delightful Prospects of the future Happiness, and the Security of our highest Concernments, must be a Spring of Joy and Pleasure to the Mind.—Give me leave

(6.) To represent Religion to you under another Notion, wherein it will appear to be pleasant; and that is this, *It is following the greatest and best Examples*: a treading in the Footsteps of the wisest and most worthy Persons that ever lived,

Who does not read with Pleasure the sacred Stories of *Abel and Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joshua, Samuel, Moses, David*, and the Prophets and wise Men, whose Lives are recorded in holy Writ? And so in like Manner, with what Delight do we converse with the Accounts of the New Testament? and especially the Life of our blessed Saviour, the Lives of his Apostles, and others converted by them to the Christian Faith? And it will add Pleasure to the Ways of Religion, to consider them as the Paths in which all these great Persons walked before us. This was the Road in which they travelled up to God: and this the Way by which they obtained a good Report, and left their Name to be mentioned with Honour, through all succeeding Generations of Men.

But to come yet lower down; May we not say, that these Ways of Wisdom, and Holiness, and

and Piety, were the Ways in which our worthy and pious Ancestors walked; whose Memory is yet precious to all their Descendants? 'My Father, my Mother, now with God, walked not they in the same Steps? And this or that Friend whom I loved and valued, and this or the other Minister on whom I attended, did they not pursue this Course of Religion, and walk with God?' And it certainly hath a very great Tendency, not only to urge us to an Imitation of such Examples, but to make Religion itself more pleasant to us, when it is considered as a Copying after them, and acting like them, and as they did in these Matters, which were their Excellency and Glory, and so far forth as they obeyed the Law of God, and were themselves followers of *Christ*; whose Example and Walk alone, we may safely and implicitly follow.

It is not indeed a sufficient or a good Reason for me to take up the Profession of Religion, or live in this or the other particular Manner, however right and good it may be in itself, only because my Ancestors did so; but after I am convinced in my own Mind, of the Reasonableness and Excellency of Religion from proper Principles, it will certainly give me no small Pleasure to see that my wise and worthy Ancestors acted thus; and that I am copying after the noblest Examples of the greatest Persons upon Record in sacred Writ, and of my blessed Saviour himself. — I will only add

(7.) That

(7.) That some of the great Branches and Duties of Religion carry Pleasure and Delight in the very Notion of them, and are always in some Pleasure attended with them. For Instance, that fundamental Principle of Religion, the *Love of God*, which our Saviour tells us is the *first and great Commandment*, this is the Source of the purest and noblest Pleasures; and they who have most of this Principle within them, have most Delight. There is a Pleasure in Love, and by how much the more amiable the Object it is upon one and another Account; so much the greater Pleasure is derived from the Exercise of Love towards it. Now God is infinitely amiable in himself; and deserving of our Love upon the Score of *his Benefits* also to us: nor will he despise our Love or disappoint its Expectations of earthly Objects which court our Affections (he apt to do,) but he takes it well at our Hands that we love him; and he will give himself to us an everlasting Portion to us, in whose Love we shall Eternally Delight, and be Eternally happy.

Nor is the *Second Commandment*, the *Love of our Neighbour*, without its Pleasure; and those Offices of Benevolence and Kindness which spring from Love do afford unknown Delight and Satisfaction to a well disposed Mind. Undoubtedly there is a sacred Pleasure in doing Good. So *Thankfulness to God for Benefits received*, is almost pleasurable Work; and the Soul, swel-

ling with Gratitude to its great Benefactor, feels itself at the same Time highly pleased and delighted with the Expressions of it. In like Manner that Piece of Devotion, which is nigh akin to this, the *Celebration of God's Praises*, is a most delightful Employment. And how should it be otherwise when it is the very Work of Heaven itself? *It is a good Thing to give Thanks unto the Lord, and to sing Praises unto thy Name, O my High: to shew forth thy Loving-Kindness in the Morning and thy Faithfulness every Night.* Psal. xcii. 1, 2. *Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing Praises unto our God: for it is pleasant, and Praise is comely,* Psal. cxlviii. 1. *Let every Thing that hath Breath praise the Lord.*

To Trust in the Lord is at once an Anchor to the Soul, and a Spring of Joy. *Our Hearts shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in his holy Name.* Psal. xxxiii. 21.

To Pray to our Father which seeth in Secret, and who heareth Prayer, and is able to do for us exceeding above all that we are able to ask or think, is an Exercise in which the Religious Soul finds much Pleasure: and is particularly the greatest Ease and Support to an afflicted Mind.

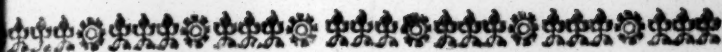
Yea, it is a Part of Religion, and a noble Part too, to *Delight ourselves also in the Lord.* Psal. xxxvii. 4. *Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the Desires of thine Heart.*

And can Religion now be a mournful and melancholy Thing, when some of the Chief Branches

if it thus carry Pleasure in their very Notion ?
when it consists so much in *Love* and *Thankful-*
ness, in *Prayer* and *Praise*, in *Trusting* Gd and
Delighting in Him ? No ! *the Ways of Wisdom*
are surely Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths
are Joy and Peace.

This I have been endeavouring to prove to you,
omitting many other Considerations which I might
have made use of for the same Purpose) from
the single but comprehensive Argument taken
from the Nature of Religion itself, which I have
represented in various Views ; in all of which
it is, and cannot but be, Pleasant.—But I will
say no more at present ; designing (if God please)
to resume the Subject on some future Occasion,
and consider the remaining Part of the Verse :
and then improve the whole with some practical
remarks, addressed particularly to the Circum-
stances and Consciences of younger Persons,



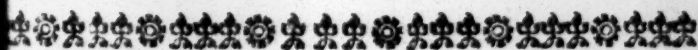


The Paths of Wisdom Paths of Peace.

S E R M O N II.

P R E A C H E D

SEPTEMBER 29, 1731.





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PROV. iii. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, And all
her Paths are Peace.*



Q U may remember I entered upon the Consideration of this Subject some Time since. And though there have elapsed above three Months since that Time, yet have I never had a convenient Season, all that while, to resume the Subject, and to apply it to the Circumstances and Consequences of those to whom it was principally to be directed.

During this Interval of Time, the Hand of God hath been upon many young Persons; they have several of them been laid upon a Bed of Sickness: and Visitations of this Kind have come through whole Families; and it hath been the Will of God to remove one of them by death into the other the eternal World. I mention these Providences hoping I shall thereby more effect-

effectually awaken the Attention of those whom God hath spared, and suffered to survive: and that they will hear more seriously what shall be further offered to them from the Word of God, to engage their Hearts for God and Religion. You know not how few Opportunities of this Nature may be allowed to you, or how soon God may think fit to put a Period to your Days on Earth, and call you into the other World. Wherefore I beseech you let my Counsel be this Day acceptable to you; and may the holy Spirit of God follow with his powerful Blessing, what shall be delivered that is agreeable to his Will, and hath a Tendency to direct your Feet into *the Ways of Wisdom, which are Ways of Pleasantness, and all whose Paths are Peace.*

In discoursing upon these Words it was proposed to recommend *Religion* to you (for that is the *Wisdom* which *Solomon* here speaks of) from the two Considerations here suggested; viz.—(1.) That *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*,—(2.) That *her Paths are Peace*.—It was the first of the Considerations which I designed chiefly to insist upon: and I have accordingly employed our intire Discourse in representing and proving to you the *Pleasantness* of Religion.—I now proceed

II. To the second Consideration in the Text viz. that *all the Paths of Wisdom are also Paths of PEACE. Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.*

I do not propose to enlarge much upon this head; or to consider it so fully and particularly

I did the former: but shall content myself with suggesting a few Hints by Way of Explanation and Proof of this Assertion, that so I may leave the more Room for some practical Application of the Subject. And here I would observe, 1. That the Word PEACE, in the Hebrew Language, is a general Term; importing *all Manner of Happiness Prosperity and Comfort in this World, and the next.*

The usual Form of Salutation and Benediction among the Jews was, *Peace be with you.* And thus when our Saviour sent forth seventy of his Disciples to preach in the Cities and Towns of Judea, this is Part of the Instruction he gave them, that *into whatever House they first entered they should say, Peace be to this House,* Luke x.

that is, let the Divine Blessing, and every thing that is comfortable and good come upon this House. And doubtless in this large and comprehensive Sense of the term *Peace*, Religion and Virtue stands intitled to it. The Paths of Religion or Wisdom lead to Honour, Reputation, Success in our Affairs, Riches, long Life, Comfort and Satisfaction in this World, as well as Happiness in the next. So in the Verse before the Text, *Solomon declares concerning Wisdom, that Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour.*

Indeed this must be understood with some Restriction. Not as if God had universally promised to all good Men that they shall be healthy and prosperous and great in the World, (for the contrary to this is frequently the Case) but only that they shall enjoy as much of the Comforts of this Life as are good for them, and will not hurt their better Interests. To which may be added, that, in the Nature of the Thing, Piety and Virtue have a Tendency to promote the Health of our Bodies, the Success of our worldly Affairs, and to gain the Esteem and Good-will of others, as might be shewn in various Regards. As on the other Hand, vicious and immoral Practices not only hurt Men's Souls, and are prejudicial to their future their everlasting Concernments; but they are frequently found ruinous to their Bodies, and destructive of all their Worldly Comfort also. How many poor Creatures are there who have been betrayed into Want and Misery, Sickneſs and Disgrace, by their Excesses and Indulgences to sinful Lusts; and whose Vices have compleatly ruined them in both Worlds! Whereas in all Probability by Sobriety and Temperance, and a Course of Diligence and Virtue, they might have provided comfortably for themselves in this World, as well as secured the Favour of God in the next.

The chief and principal Exception to this Assertion of *Solomon* in the Text, is the Case of Persecution for Religion; whereby good Men have

have been exposed to Ruin merely for their Virtue, and their Faithfulness to God and a good Conscience. Thus the many Martyrs for the Christian Faith were called to seal their Testimony to Religion even with their Blood. But this Exception will not invalidate the Truth of Solomon's Observation, which in general still holds good, that *the Paths of Wisdom are Paths of Peace.* For so they are usually and for the most part; and even in the Case now mentioned, that of losing Life itself, I doubt not but many have resigned Life with much more Satisfaction, Joy, and Comfort, than others have preserved it: and their Reward hath been great in Heaven.

But, excepting the Case of Persecution, that Man that fears God, and directs his Conduct by the Rules of Sobriety, Virtue and Honour; is in a far more likely Way to Success and Prosperity in this World than the Wretch that hath no regard to God, and the Rules of Justice, Temperance and Piety. *It is the Blessing of God which maketh rich,* Prov. x. 22. And the Apostle Paul observes that *Godliness hath the Promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. iv. 8. And if we have but a little of this present World, we may yet enjoy it with more real Comfort and Satisfaction than others derive from their Abundance, according to that Observation of the Psalmist, *a little that the righteous Man hath, is better than the Treasures of many Wicked,* Psal. xxxvii. 16. But

2. If

2. If we consider the Word PEACE in a more restrained Sense, doubtless *the Paths of Wisdom* must be allowed to be indeed *Paths of Peace*, and the only Ones that are so.

It is Religion only that can make a Man calm and easy in his own Mind, and render his Heart serene and peaceful. *The Wicked are like the troubled Sea, whose Waves cast forth Mire and Dirt*, that cannot rest, but are ever tosing and moving: *there is, there can be no solid Peace, Satisfaction, and Contentment, no well-grounded Calmness and Composure of Mind to the Wicked*. God hath himself said so: and they to their Cost find it so; *Isai. lvii. 20, 21. But great Peace have they, O God, that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them, Psal. cxix. 165. Thou wilt keep them in perfect Peace whose Mind is stayed on thee, Isai. xxvi. 3.* They enjoy the Approbation of their own Minds, and hope for the everlasting Favour of their God. And *the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding keepeth their Hearts and Minds in Christ Jesus, Phil. iv. 6, 7.* In all the Views in which Religion was represented to you as the Foundation of Pleasure, if you will please to consider them apart you will find them no less the Spring of Peace, of pure and lasting Peace and Satisfaction. But I proceed to observe,

3. Wisdom or Religion will furnish us with *Peace of Mind amidst the various Troubles of Life*

It is not indeed to be supposed that Religion will exempt us from all Manner of Trouble in the World. *Man is born unto Trouble, as the sparks fly upwards*, Job. v. 7. But it will in a great Measure keep us from self-created Troubles, (which are the worst kind) and will furnish us with Support and Consolation under those Afflictions which the Hand of God may at any Time bring upon us.

A good Man hath such Principles within him, and such Prospects before him, as lay a Foundation of Peace and Comfort for him under all his Afflictions. He knows that the all-wise and most merciful God has the over-ruling of all Affairs, and that all will issue well at last, and well with him, and with all those *that love God*, Rom. viii. 28. *All the Paths of the Lord are Mercy and Truth unto such as keep his Covenant and his Testimonies*, Psal. xxv. 10. To this God he makes his Applications, and finds from him Mercy and Grace suitable to his Circumstances, Heb. iv. 16. To his Will he resigns himself, and in such Resignation finds unspeakable Satisfaction; and from him he conceives the Expectations of a Happiness in the Future State which will be complete and everlasting: the Hope of which is an Anchor to his Soul, and keeps him steady, preserving him from being lost in the Waves of Adversity: see *Heb. vi. 19*.

In short, it is Religion alone that can support us under the Troubles, especially the heavier

Troubles, of Life. When on the other Hand, as a Course of Sin is the frequent Occasion of Trouble in itself, so the Remembrance of our Sins at such a Season is peculiarly galling; and is sometimes as a Millstone hung about our Necks, sinking us into the very Depths of Sorrow and Despair.—But that which further recommends Religion to our Love and Practice is,

4. That it will give us *Peace when we come to Dye.*

The Reflection upon a Life spent in the Fear of God, and the Practice of Virtue, always yields Satisfaction to the Soul; but never is it more agreeable, than when we come to the concluding Scene of Life. Then *the Testimony of our Consciences, that in Simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our Conversations in the World*, is a Spring of Joy and Pleasure. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright; (saith the Psalmist) for the End of that Man is Peace,* Psal. xxxviii. 37. Nothing but Religion can then administer Peace and Comfort; but this is able to support the Soul when all other Things fail it. But the Conscience of Guilt, and the Remembrance of a Life spent in wickedness, and the Neglect of God and our Eternal Interests, will make the awful Hour infinitely dreadful to the Sinner.

But above all,

Lastly, There is this to be said further in behalf of Religion, that its *Paths* lead to a *Peace* which will end in *everlasting Peace in Heaven.*

Souls of the Righteous enter into Peace, *Isai. lvii.*
 2. into a World where there is nothing but
 everlasting Joy and Peace; where Sorrow and
 Trouble never comes; where all Tears are wiped
 away from their Eyes, and everlasting Gladness
 crowns their Heads. Now they are at Peace com-
 pletely, and for ever; and enjoy not only an Ex-
 emption from all Trouble, but are put into the Po-
 session of positive Happiness; a Happiness large as
 their Wishes, and lasting as the Eternity of God.

But the Wicked are not so. Their Steps take
hold of Hell, and lead down to everlasting Sor-
 rows. Peace is now for ever hid from their Eyes,
 and they lie down in the Sparks of their own
 kindling for ever.

It will suffice to have suggested these few Things
 relating to the Peace which attends the Paths of
 Wisdom, or Religion. Your own Minds may
 enlarge further on these Hints. Wherefore I
 will now endeavour to improve the Subject be-
 fore us in a Way of Practical Application;
 wherein I shall address myself particularly to the
 younger Branches of this Society.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

And since *the Ways of Wisdom are thus Ways of*
pleasantness, and all its Paths Peace, then,

1. Let us learn hence to correct our mistaken
 apprehensions of Religion.

It is too common a Thing for Persons, and especially for those that are in the younger Years of Life, to be prejudiced against Religion and Virtue from their wrong Apprehensions of the Nature of it. They conceive of it as a most gloomy and melancholy Thing, which will put a Period at once to all their Pleasures, if they should harken to the Dictates of it. Suffer me to ask you, my younger Friends, have you not been apt to form such Conceptions as these of a Religious Life; and in consequence of them been, as it were, affrighted from a suitable Regard to it; and have thought it proper only for old Persons, that have lived beyond the Relish of the Pleasures and Joys of Life, but that it would by no means be suitable or agreeable to your tender Years? Believe me, my dear Friends, this is all a Mistake, a gross Mistake. Religion is the most pleasant Thing in all the World, and there are no Delights comparable to those of Wisdom and Virtue. *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*, and not of Sownerness and Melancholy. You are allowed all the innocent Pleasures of this Life: and abridged of none but such as are really hurtful to you. And would you desire these? Religion is no Enemy to Chearfulness, and sober Mirth. For in Truth of all Persons in the World, none have so much Reason to be chearful and easy as good Persons. And God himself loves to see them so. *Go thy Way, (saith Solomon) eat thy Bread with Joy*

and drink thy *Wine* with a merry Heart, for God
now accepteth thy *Works*, Eccles. ix. 7. And,
ever and above the common Pleasures of Life,
you will have the additional Ones of Religion;
which are sweet in themselves, and add Sweet-
ness to all the rest.

Learn therefore to think of Religion, not as
a dismal and melancholy Thing, but, as it is
in Truth, the most agreeable Thing that can be;
and banish all Suspicions to the Contrary: which
are only the Suggestions of the Father of Lies, or
of his Children in Wickedness. Remember, that
in all the several and most considerable Views of
Religion, you have had it proved to you, I hope
to your Satisfaction, that it is, and cannot but
be according to the nature of Things, a most
pleasant and delightful Thing: and fix these Ap-
prehensions of it in your Minds.—But to
proceed,

2. We may hence infer the great Folly of Sin-
ners, who run away from Religion for want of
pleasure.

Alas, foolish and unhappy Creatures! Reli-
gion is the chief Pleasure of Life. And if you
go to seek for Pleasures elsewhere, you will be sad-
ly disappointed in the Issue. Are you not rea-
sonable Creatures? and should not the Pleasures
you pursue be such as are fit for Persons of your
rank; such as Reason approves? You will not call
the Pleasures of a Brute the chief Happiness of
Man! (though even here, as I have just now

observed, Religion does not abridge us of any mere animal Delights and Gratifications, which are innocent in themselves, and do no Hurt to ourselves or others,) and those Pleasures which you pursue are they not vain and deceitful? are they not very short lived? and have they not a Sting attending them? whereas those of Religion are pure, unmixed and durable, and leave a grateful Relish behind them. And you not only leave *better* Pleasures when you forsake Virtue and Religion, and pursue the Paths of Sin; but you also leave far *more* Pleasures than any you can find elsewhere: so that you exchange every Way for the worse; and have upon the whole, not only meaner but much fewer Pleasures. And how often do we see, that while foolish thoughtless Wretches throw off all Regard to Religion, and pursue with eagerness the Gratifications of Sense, and think that they are swimming in Pleasure and Delight; they are only making haste to bring themselves into Poverty, Sicknes, Disgrace, and an immature Death! And how dearly do they pay, even in this World, for their little Draught of Pleasure! They may say, like *Jonathan* the Son of *Saul* upon another Occasion, *I did but taste a little Honey with the End of my Rod, and lo! I must die*, 1 Sam. xiv. 43. How many mourn at the last, when their Flesh and their Body is consumed, and their Substance squandered away, and they are sinking into Pains and Death; and are forced to say, *how have I hated*

Instruc-

Instruction, and my Heart despised Reproof! Prov. i. 11, 12. see also, *Verse 22, 23,* of that Chapter; *his own Iniquity will take the Wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the Cords of his Sins: he shall die without Instruction, and in the greatness of his Folly shall he go astray.*—It is greatness of Folly, indeed, to go astray from the Paths of Religion, in quest of Pleasure. This is as if a Man should leave the Springs of pure Water, and repair to muddy and defiled Streams to slake his Thirst. Or, in the Language of sacred Writ, *this is to forsake the Fountain of living Water, and hew out unto ourselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no water,* Jer. ii. 13.

O! try not, my dear young Friends, the dangerous Experiment. It will assuredly prove *bit-terness in the latter End.* Others have tried it and found it so to them: learn you Wisdom from their Folly, and the Consequences of it; and desire not to be wise at your own Cost.

The Way of Transgressors is hard, Prov. xiii. 5. Not only their End but oftentimes *their Way,* their present Course, is attended with Difficulties and self-created Vexations and Distresses.—It is therefore upon all Accounts a Piece of Folly, for any one to run away from Religion for want of Pleasure. But,

3. Hence also we infer the great Goodness of God, who is pleased to connect our Pleasure and our Duty together; so that whilst we con-
scien-

scientifically perform the one, we shall infallibly, in some Measure, find the other.

It is an Argument of the divine Benignity, and of his Love to his Creatures and Delight in their Happiness, that the Ways of Wisdom which he hath made it their Duty to walk in, are even at present *Ways of so much Pleasantness and Peace*; not to say any Thing of the Happiness they lead to in the Future State,

Had the Divine Being been merciless and cruel, (which by the Way is an impossible Supposition, or a Supposition impossible to be true) we could not suppose him settling such a kind Constitution of Things as now obtains. But God is good, the best of Beings, *abundant in Goodness*, and takes Pleasure in the Comfort and Happiness of his Creatures; and hath sworn by himself that *he hath no Pleasure, no not in the Death and Misery of finally impenitent Sinners*, that have long and wilfully despised his Government and abused his Grace, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11.*

Let me recommend it particularly to you, my young Friends, to entertain good Thoughts of God. He is the most amiable Being in the Universe, and delights in doing Good. Think not of God as of an Almighty Tyrant, a hard and severe Master; or as a Being void of Compassion and Benevolence, and the Object only of your Fear but not of your Love. No! such Apprehensions of the Divine Being are highly injurious to him, are utterly groundless in them-

selves

lves, and will be very prejudicial to you. But you would conceive of God aright, think of him not only as the greatest but as the very *best* of all Beings, the Fountain of Goodness, yea as Goodness itself. And such Conceptions of God will dispose you to love Him, and to chose him as your Governour now, and as your final Felicity and Blessedness hereafter.

Further give me leave to observe,

4. That what is here said concerning the Ways of Wisdom, that they are Ways both of *Pleasantness* and *Peace*, can in no Sense be asserted concerning the Ways of Sin and Folly. If these have all the *Pleasure* in them (which some Sinners would fondly make us believe they have) yet doubtless they are not *Paths of Peace*. *There is no Peace, saith God, to the Wicked.* They stand self-condemned, their own Minds inwardly reproach them, Conscience flies in their Face and stirs up Remorse and Anguish; and they cannot but live in a perpetual Dread of the sad Issue of Things at last, when God shall call them to Judgment: so that the little Pleasure they have must needs be sadly imbittered to them, and they must be altogether Strangers to *Peace*.

Bear this Thought upon your Mind in an hour of Temptation, and never purchase Pleasure at the Expence of your Peace; but keep steadfast to Religion and Virtue, and you will thereby secure to yourselves at once the *noblest pleasures, and the most solid Peace.*

5. Since

5. Since the Ways of Wisdom are *Ways of Peace*, you will be utterly inexcusable then, if you do not walk in them.

If a Religious Life were one continued Scene of Trouble, Sorrow and Difficulty, and the Virtuous Man were never to enjoy one Moment's Peace during the whole of his Abode here on Earth; yet since there awaits him in the Future State an Eternity of Happiness and Joy, it would yet be every Man's Wisdom to be Religious, because there is no Proportion between a little temporal Trouble, and the everlasting Recompences of Heaven. And it would be Folly and Madness to forego an Eternity of Pleasure, for the Sake of avoiding a little Trouble for a few Days or Years. But now when Things are settled, that the Ways of Religion are not only to issue at length in Peace and Happiness eternal, but, are even at present also *Ways of Pleasantness and Paths of Peace*, what Words can describe the Folly and extreme Madness of those who neglect Virtue and Religion, and thereby deprive themselves at once of the best Pleasures here, and of everlasting Pleasures hereafter? What can you say in Excuse for yourselves in such a Case, when you shall appear before the awful Tribunal of your Maker? And can you ever now excuse yourselves to your own Minds, or avoid the Reproach of your own Consciences? You will be speechless at the great Day, and must be very uneasy now, whenever you give

your

yourself the Trouble to reflect seriously upon your own conduct. What could God offer more to engage you in his Service than Pleasure and Peace on Earth, and the Perfection of both these in Heaven? And you must be intirely inexcusable if such complicated and endearing and powerful Motives, have no suitable Influence upon you. Sin, Satan, and the World, can offer you nothing like an Equivalent to these Things, or any Thing that can supply their Place.

6. The Subject we are considering will lead us to observe the great Blessing of a religious Education. For hereby you have fairer Advantages for Religion than others enjoy. You are not like to have such Prejudices against it as others are too apt to entertain. You will (at least you should) have Religion represented to you in its most amiable Views, and the Practice of it urged, repeatedly urged, upon your Consciences, by such Motives as are most apt to impress and prevail with you. And you enjoy the unspeakable Blessing of Religion and Virtue, not only explained in Rules and Words, but, exemplified in the Lives and Actions of your pious Parents and Friends. And in Proportion to your Advantages for Religion, will be your Advantages also of obtaining Pleasure and Peace. For (as we have seen) these are the constant Attendants upon *that*. And, consequently, you can never enough be thankful unto God for the Favour of a religious Education; whereby you are thrown into such

such happy Circumstances for obtaining Pleasure and Peace.

Be sensible of this, my young Friends, who enjoy this mighty Happiness: esteem it as an inestimable Prize; but above all take care to improve it; lest that which is in itself one of the most distinguishing Favours of Providence, should by the Occasion of your Misimprovement of it, serve only to enhance your present Guilt, and enflame your future Misery.

There are a great many other Inferences and Reflections, which would arise out of this Subject, which I must at present omit; and apply myself more particularly to that, which indeed hath been the Tendency and main Design of the whole Discourse, *viz.* to recommend Religion and Wisdom to young Persons, and to urge a little upon their Consciences by way of serious and affectionate Expostulation. And O! that it might be with Success also.

And now therefore I turn myself to you my young Friends, whose best Interest I am endeavouring to promote, and pray that you would suffer me this Day to reason the Case with you, and to be your Monitor in the Lord.

Are you for *Pleasure*? Behold, I offer you the purest the noblest and most lasting Pleasures, those of Religion. Pleasures which may in a Sense be called Divine and Godlike; being in their Proportion somewhat of the same Kind with those which God himself enjoys, and which render

him so blessed a Being. It is true, on the other Hand, Sin and the World lay Snares for your Affections, and court your younger Love with the Bait of Pleasure too. But trust them not; how fair and specious soever their Promises may be, believe me, they are false and deceitful, and will, in the End, lead you to Pain and Sorrow. You will find the Thing which they call Pleasure, to be all empty and unsatisfactory Shadows and Dreams, or noisy and unquiet, and a certain Enemy to your *Peace*. They have slain already their Thousands and ten Thousands, who have been all forced to confess at length, that they were not only *Vanity* but *Vexation* also to their Spirits. If you desire only innocent Pleasures, I have already shewed you that Religion will not abridge you of one of these, but allows them to you with full Liberty; but if you go a Step beyond these you are betrayed into Snares and Mischief. If you forsake the Paths of Virtue and Innocence, it is ten to one but your own Folly will correct you even in this World; and that you will have Occasion to wish ten Thousand Times that you had never departed from the Ways of Wisdom. But, supposing you should make a Shift to go tolerably thro' this World, what will you do when you come to dye? Will the Pleasures of Sin then refresh and delight you? or will they not rather be as so many Swords piercing into your very Hearts?—And how infinitely dreadful the final Issue!

When God shall say, *depart from me ye workers of Iniquity into everlasting Fire.*

But the Religious Soul, his *Way* is pleasant and his *End* is Peace. He may look back on Life with constant Pleasure and Satisfaction, and may look forwards with Joy into the other World; where there awaits him a State of endless Happiness with God and his Saviour, whose Angels stand around his dying Bed to watch the departing Spirit, and bear it safe to the mansions of everlasting Bliss.

Nor think that I am talking impertinently, and besides the Purpose, when I am putting you young as you are, in Mind of Death and a Future State. It is no impossible Thing for younger Persons to dye, as well as those of advanced Age. Many are the Instances of immature and early Death.—But suppose you should be spared a while longer, yet a Period of your Days will soon approach, and an everlasting and unchangeable State of Happiness or Misery awaits you beyond the Grave. Nor is there any Way to make the Conclusion of your Days and the final Issue of Things in the other World safe and comfortable, but by walking now in the Way of Wisdom and Religion.

Why then should you not begin now, even now, to *fear God and keep his Commandments* and live according to Reason and Religion? The sooner you enter upon the Practice of Religion it will upon many Accounts be the more pleasant

tant to you : whereas every Day's Delay will increase your Difficulties, and make your Repentance both a more troublesome and a more hazardous Thing. Every Step you go out of the Way of Wisdom must be measured over again ; or, if you proceed in it, it leads to certain Death. Are you affraid of having too much Pleasure, or of laying too sure a Foundation for your present and eternal Peace ?——Let me then be the happy Instrument of prevailing with you this Day to resolve for God, Religion, and a holy Life. This will be highly pleasing to God, who will remember the Kindness of your Youth : and who, in an especial Manner, loves them that seek him early. And what a mighty Joy and Pleasure will it be to your religious Parents, and pious Friends and Instructors, to see this happy Fruit of all the kind and well-meant Pains they have taken in instructing you, and the frequent fervent Prayers they send up for you !——The Ministers of the Gospel will rejoice over you ; and it will administer peculiar Delight and Joy to the most unworthy of God's Servants that now speaks to you. Yea, it will be a great Pleasure, to all that wish well to the Interest of God and Religion in the World, to see the *Children rising up in the Stead of their Parents*, and calling the *God of their Fathers* blessed. But your own Pleasure will be the greatest of all, as you yourselves will be the greatest Gainers by such a Course of Life.

I know not how to give over expostulating with you, though the Case is plain and evident; but it is vastly important!—And I pray God to carry on the Expostulation in your Consciences, while I shut up this Discourse with one or two brief Directions, to which I beg your Attention, and so shall conclude.

1. Be not discouraged, if you should meet with some little Difficulty and Trouble, in your first setting out in the *Ways of Wisdom*.

Perhaps it may not be so easy to you to be serious, and thoughtful, and considerate in all your Actions at first, for want of Use. The Corruptions of your Mind will be apt to rebel, and Satan and the World will endeavour to throw Difficulties and Discouragements in your Way, to divert you from your Purpose. But regard them not; go on still in the Strength of God, call up all your Resolution, and move forward in the Paths of Virtue, and you will find your Difficulties and Troubles gradually sinking before you, and lessening every Day more than other upon your Hands.

2. Begin betimes to place the Main of your Religion in that which is truly and most substantially so.

Learn to lay the Stress of your Religion where it ought to be laid. Think not that true Religion consists in Modes or Forms, and an external Way of Worship, either different from, or conformable to, the Generality of our Fellow-Christians.

tians. No, Religion is not *Meats and Drinks*, but *Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xiv. 17. Endeavour to get right and just Notions of the true Nature and Design of Religion; and (as I said) place the Main of your Religion in that which is truly and most substantially so; not in useless Speculations about the abstruse Points of Divinity, not in angry Disputes with those that differ from us, not in a Round of outward and formal Exercises of Devotion, nor in needless Abstinences and Mortifications of the Flesh. If you mistake these Things for Religion, I am not the Person that will venture to promise you Pleasure and Peace in them: nor should you arraign the Truth of Solomon's Assertion in the Text if you find them not. Alas! Religion is something more noble than all this amounts to, and mainly consists in Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Love of our Neighbour; in the Practice, the conscientious and steady Practice, of Sobriety Righteousness and Godliness; in the Exercises of Faith Hope and Charity. This is the Religion I am recommending, and in the Practice of this I dare promise you *Pleasure and Peace*; for God himself hath promised it.—I will only add,

3. That if you desire to know the Pleasures of Religion, and a holy Life, humbly and earnestly beg of God to renew your Hearts by his Spirit and Grace.

Without this you will always be incapable of relishing the Pleasures of Religion. You will not have a Taste suited to them. There is no such Thing as becoming Virtuous and Good without the Grace of God, and the renewing Influences of his Spirit. We brought into the World with us many Weaknesses and corrupt Dispositions, and we stand in Need of healing and strengthening Grace. Look up then to God, my younger Friends, and pray for the Assistance of God's holy Spirit to help you in all the Services of Religion. Earnestly pray that his Grace may descend upon you, and mould your Hearts aright, that he would be pleased to rectify the Disorders which Sin hath introduced into your Souls, and to vouchsafe to you both Light and Strength, that you may know your Duty and your Happiness, and may so perform the one as to secure the other, through the Merits and Mediation of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*: to whose Grace I commend you: and to whom be Glory in the Churches throughout all Ages, World without End, AMEN.

3 NO 63





*The Importance of an early Acquaintance with
Scripture.*

S E R M O N III.

P R E A C H E D

AUGUST 13, 1733.







2 TIM. iii. 15.

And that from a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.

EVERY one, that is at all concerned about the State of Religion in the World, must be sensible of how great Importance it is to secure the Hearts of young Persons in the Interests of it. aged Christians are from Time to Time removing out of this World into a better, and others do not stand up in their Stead and all the Name of God blessed, what must e're long come of Religion? It must of Course decline; must wither and dye away. If the Births be not proportionable to the Deaths, but more continually dye than are born in any Nation, such People or Nation must gradually decay and wear out. It is melancholy to observe, how few the Descendants of pious Parents do, in our Age, tread in their Steps; and how many there are

are on the Contrary, who, instead of being a Comfort to their aged Progenitors, do only bring down their grey Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave.

It is therefore very necessary, for all that will do well to the Interests of Religion, and for Ministers in particular, to use their utmost Endeavours to influence the rising Generation to a Sense of God, and a serious Regard to Religion and Virtue. Excuse me therefore, my young Friends, if, from a Principle of Regard to God, and an affectionate Concern for your Welfare, I have now called you together to speak unto you on God's Behalf. And I beg your careful Attention to what shall be offered to you, conformable to the holy Scriptures, which, from the Place now read to you, I would recommend to your serious Consideration.

Timothy, to whom the Apostle *Paul* is here writing, was a most excellent young Person; he was descended of very pious Ancestors, at least on the Mothers side: for we read of *the unfeigned Faith which dwelt in his Grand-mother Lois and his Mother Eunice*, 2 Tim i. 5. These holy Women early instructed their Child *Timothy* in the sacred Writings; and he readily fell in with their Instructions, and studied the Scriptures with as much Pleasure as they recommended them.

Happy Child, who was blessed with such pious and prudent Instructions! And happy

ents, who were blessed with so towardsly and good a Child!

Timothy thus grew up before the Lord; and by means of his early Acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, was formed to that seriousness of Temper, and Love to God and Truth, which disposed him to become an easy Convert to the Christian Faith, when fairly proposed to him. To this probably he was first brought by the preaching and Instruction of the Apostle *Paul*; who frequently calls him *his Son, his own Son in the Faith, his dearly beloved Son*; and who seems to have retained a peculiar Affection for him all his Life, and soon put him into the Ministry.

And it appears, from the Accounts of him in the New Testament, that he discharged the Function of an *Evangelist* with great Reputation and happy Success. He was the Companion of the Apostle *Paul* in most of his Travels, and as *Son with the Father, served with him in the Gospel*. And besides his ordinary Attendance on the Apostle, he was frequently dispatched by him on particular Occasions to visit the Churches; to instruct, reprove, or comfort, as the Case required. Thus, for Instance, you find him sent by the Apostle to the *Thessalonians*, 1 Thes. iii. 2, 3. And when *Paul* went himself into *Macedonia*, he besought *Timothy* to stay at *Ephesus*, to preside over the Ministers there, and to direct and establish them against Seducers. 1 Tim. i. 3.

On

On some of these Occasions, when *Timothy* was absent from the Apostle, Saint *Paul* wrote this second Epistle to him; the general Design of which, as well as the former, was to furnish him with Instructions and Encouragements relating to the Discharge of his Duty, both as a Minister of Christ, and an Evangelist.

In the Verse before my Text, the Apostle charges *Timothy* to continue in the Things which he had learned, (the great Things of Salvation in general, and of the Gospel Salvation in particular which he had been assured of, (had seen in their full Evidence, and was strongly persuaded of the Truth of.) And he enforces this Charge with two Considerations,—(1.) *That he knew from whom he had learned them; (viz.) from the Apostle himself, who had been divinely instructed by our Lord Jesus Christ, as Timothy well knew; who also was acquainted with the Integrity of the Apostle's Heart, (appearing through the whole Course of his Life and Letters) with his extraordinary Wisdom, and those supernatural Gifts of the Holy Ghost which he was blessed with himself and had communicated to him and many others, and with the peculiar Affection he had for him. So that considering the Person from whom he had learned the great Things of God and the Christian Religion, he had the utmost Reason to continue in the Things he had learned.*—(2.) The next Consideration is in the Text that from a Child he had known the holy Scrip

ures. And therefore it was reasonably expected from him, that he should continue stedfast and persevering in the Doctrine and Practice of true Religion, and not suffer himself to be corrupted by the influence of evil and seducing Men, ver. 13.

Having mentioned the holy Scriptures, the Apostle adds, by way of Commendation of those Divine Writings, that *they were able to make him wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

The Scriptures of the *Old Testament* are doubtless what the Apostle here chiefly refers to; since *Timothy* could not from a Child have been instructed in those of the *New*; a great Part of which were not yet written. And when the Apostle asserts of these, that *they are able to make him wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus*, his meaning is, that the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, especially as explained and opened by the Gospel of Christ, did contain in them Things needful to instruct Men in the Doctrines and Duties of true Religion, by the Knowledge and Practice whereof they might attain to everlasting Happiness. The sacred Writings of the *Old Testament* were happily sufficient for these purposes, in those that had no other Light: but when the Gospel Revelation was published, *Faith in Christ*, or in the Doctrines of the Gospel, became also necessary. But taking in both the Writings of the *Old and New Testament*, which

are the Canon of us Christians, we may strongly pronounce concerning them, that *they are able to make Men wise unto Salvation.*

It is in this large, and collective Sense, that I shall use the Word *Scriptures* in the following Discourse; as comprehending all the sacred Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, of *Christ* and his Apostles, which are collected together, and form one BIBLE or sacred Canon.

Having offered these few Things, by Way of Explication of the general Design and Import of the Words, I shall now endeavour further to illustrate and improve them, by making the following Observations upon them.

Obf. 1. That the holy Scriptures are every Way a sufficient, and indeed the only, Rule of Faith and Practice.

This is a plain Consequence of the Apostolic Assertion concerning them in the Text. For if the Scriptures *are able to make us wise unto Salvation*, what want we more? Nothing that is necessary to be believed, or known, or done, in Order to our Acceptance with God, can be supposed wanting in those Writings which are able *to make us wise unto everlasting Salvation.*

As this is the Foundation and Bulwark of Protestantism, it is fit that young Protestants should be early instructed in this fundamental Principle of our Religion. It is well known that the

ists deny this, to make Way for their *oral Traditions*; by which they have not only added new Articles of Faith, and Rites of Worship, to those which Christ hath appointed in his Word; but have also introduced many Things which are absolutely contrary to the Scriptures, and destructive of their Authority and Use. And some Protestants too, who in Word indeed own and plead for the Sufficiency of the Scriptures, have yet in Fact destroyed it, by setting up human Compositions, of one or another Kind, as the last Standard and Test of Faith; an Honour which is due only to the sacred Writings. You are not to call any Man Master upon Earth. No, my young Friends, *Christ* is our only Authoritative Master, and the Bible our only Standard. It becomes you indeed to be very thankful for the Helps and Advantages you are blessed with, for the better understanding the Doctrines and Duties contained in the holy Scriptures, whether by Books, or by the Instructions of your Parents or Teachers; but your Faith should ultimately rest on the pure Word of God. This is sufficient to guide your Beliefs, and form your Manners; and all other Compositions, that are meerly human, are to be measured by this Standard, and allowed only so far as they agree with it.——*To the Law and the Testimony, if they speak not according to the Word, it is because they have no Light in them,* Matt. viii. 20.

Obf. II. An early Acquaintance with the holy Scriptures is the moſt likely Means to form young Perſons to Religion and Virtue.

We have before ſeen the happy Influence which *Timothy's* Knowledge of the holy Scriptures had to engage his early Regard to God and Religion; and the like Influence hath it had on other young Perſons from Age to Age. I perſuade myſelf that ſome of you, my young Friends, can bear Witneſs to the Divine Efficacy of the ſacred Writings upon your Minds. *Wherewith ſhall a young Man cleanſe his Way? By taking Heed thereto according to thy Word,* Pſal. cxix. 9. — Indeed I know of no Means more likely to impreſs your Minds with Sentiments of Virtue, and a Dread of Sin, than an early Acquaintance with your Bibles: which is the Reason that led me to the Choice of this Subject on the preſent Occaſion.

It would require a whole Diſcourſe of itſelf, to ſet this Matter in its full Light, and to ſhew how happily the Scriptures are calculated for the Advantage of young Perſons. But I would only obſerve, at Preſent, that there is ſomething in the Nature of the Things themſelves, contained in the Scriptures, and eſpecially in the Manner of their Delivery, which is peculiarly ſuitable to young Perſons. The Things themſelves there reported are very great and important, of various Kinds; and many of them vaſtly ſurprizing and
wonder

wonderful, and affording the most agreeable Entertainment. They are delivered chiefly by Way of History, or Narration; a Way of Instruction adapted peculiarly to the Temper and Genius of young Persons, who hereby receive Instruction in the most agreeable Manner, and in such a Way as fixes the Impression deep upon their Minds and Memories. They are hereby at once entertained and instructed; and Sentiments of Virtue are conveyed into their Minds, as it were, insensibly. Pleasure and Profit are here united more than in any other Book in the World.

The History of the Creation, of the State and Circumstances of the first Parents of Mankind, the peopling of the World from that single Pair; the Destruction of all the Inhabitants of it, (Noah and his Family only excepted) by an universal Deluge; the Lives of the Patriarchs, *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, &c*; the Deliverance of the Children of Israel from their Bondage in Egypt, and their Establishment into a Commonwealth and Kingdom under God, their Government and King; the various Revolutions that attended them; the Life and Miracles of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles; to which we may add the Predictions of God's Word concerning the Future State, the Resurrection of the Dead, the awful Solemnities of the Judgment, and the glorious Appearance of our advanced Lord at that Purpose; and a thousand other Narrations which the Scripture abounds with; how

admirably entertaining are they! And at the same Time, how full are they, of important Instructions, relating to the right Conduct of Life, and of the strongest Arguments to enforce the Practice of universal Obedience to God!

In a Word, here in your Bibles, my young Friends, you have the plainest and most excellent Rules of Duty prescribed to you: and you see them all happily exemplified in many beautiful Characters there recorded; several of which are of young Persons, such as *Enoch, Joseph, Samuel, Josiah, Daniel, Obadiab* and others; and you have the strongest Motives that can be to engage your Compliance with them; Motives taken from every Thing that can be supposed to influence your Minds and Conduct, both with respect to the *Life which now is, and that which is to come.*—From all which it evidently follows, that an early Acquaintance with these sacred Writings must (under God) be a most happy and likely Means of forming young Persons to Religion and Virtue. But I proceed,

Obs. III. It ought to be esteemed a very great Advantage, and singular Felicity, to be from a *Child* trained up in the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures.

This is a plain Consequence from the foregoing Proposition; and I need not spend Time in the Proof of it. But, I mention it with the

View, to make you, my Friends, who enjoy this Advantage, sensible of the Divine Goodness to you, and very thankful to God for so important a Favour.

You know this is not the Happiness of all young Persons; it is comparatively the Privilege of a few. By much the larger Part of Mankind are ignorant of any Divine Revelation; and their Children consequently destitute of the Instructions which you are blessed with. If Providence had cast your Lot in Popish Countries, you must not upon any Terms have been suffered to converse with the Scriptures; nor durst your Parents or Friends have put such a Book as the Bible into your Hands, lest they should be clapped into the Inquisition, that Image of Hell, and all that is diabolical!

And even in Protestant Countries, how many Christian Parents are there, who instead of recommending the Scriptures to their Children, teach them, by their Example, to make a Jest of the sacred Contents thereof! or, at best, are extremely negligent in the great Duty of instructing their Children out of them; and mighty indifferent whether they converse with the Scriptures or not. I doubt not but there are many Families in this Kingdom, that have no such Thing as a Bible belonging to their Houses. And it is the Unhappiness of many, that they are not able to converse with it if they had one, or teach it to their Children; having never been themselves taught

taught to read, and being in no Capacity to pay for the Instruction of their Offspring. A Call this, truly Compassionate ! And surely there is no greater Instance of Charity, than for those whom God hath blessed with Riches and Wealth in the World, to provide for the *free* Instruction of the Children of the Poor ; that they may at least be able to read the holy Scriptures, (and not perish for lack of Knowledge.

But the greatest Part of you, my young Friends, have been blessed with happy Advantages of knowing the Scriptures from your very Childhood. Your Parents and Friends have provided you with early Means of Instruction. You have been taught to read, and have had Bibles early put into your Hands ; and have, many of you, a great Variety of Helps for the better understanding that sacred Book. O ! bless God for this Favour and Privilege : and endeavour to make a wise and good Improvement of it. Esteem your Bible as your choicest Treasure : and place your early Acquaintance with it in the Catalogue of your choicest Mercies.

Obs. IV. Another Observation from the Words is this ; that it is reasonably expected from those who have from Children known the holy Scriptures, that they *should grow up before the Lord*, and be perseveringly pious and good.

You have already seen that the Apostle in the Text urges upon *Timothy* a steadfast Adherence

to true Religion, from this very Consideration I have mentioned, because *he had from a Child known the holy Scriptures. Continue in the Things thou hast heard,* (in the Belief and Practice of the Christian Religion) *knowing from whom thou hast learnt them, and that FROM A CHILD THOU HAST KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.*

And therefore it is but very reasonable to hope that you will continue stedfast and unshaken in the Faith, and not turn aside to Sin and Folly. And so, where others are blessed with like Advantages, we may indulge ourselves in the Pleasure of like Expectations from them. *To whom much is given of the same much is required,* and hoped for, both by God and Man.

A Religious Education is a Talent which God expects you should improve, as well as a Mercy for which you should be thankful. Indeed, in the very Nature of Things, the first Impressions of Youth (which are here supposed to be in Favour of Religion) are likely to form the whole after-life; especially when those Impressions are strong and lively, and where Care hath been taken to inform the Judgment, as well as to move the Affections of Children: and particularly, when they are brought up in a Regard to the pure Doctrines of God's Word, and the great and fundamental Things of Religion. When they are taught to lay the main Stress of their Religion, not on the lesser and more disputable Points of Doctrine, or Modes of Worship, in which Christians

stians do and may innocently differ from one another; but on the great and necessary Articles of Christian Faith, and the fundamental Duties of Holiness and a good Life. The Neglect of which Method of Instruction hath, I fear, been unhappily of bad Consequence to many young Persons; who, happening afterwards to differ from the peculiar *Tenets* of their Parents and Instructors, have been tempted to throw off all Regard even to their most pious and prudent Admonitions, rashly supposing them to be alike unreasonable.

It were, I think, therefore to be wished that Parents would chiefly teach their Children the great and substantial Things of Religion; such as——the Being and Perfections of God,——the Immortality of the Soul, —— a Future State of Rewards and Punishments,——the Truth and Divine Original of the Christian Revelation,——the great Duties of Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness, and the like.—For it is impossible that these Things should be afterwards overthrown; but on the Contrary, their riper Judgments must more and more approve them, and discern their Reasonableness, and Truth, their Importance, Excellence, and Necessity.—But to return to my Subject.

Suffer me to address you, my young Friends, who have from Children known the holy Scriptures, and to tell you, that ‘ you are our Hopes;
 ‘ on you our Expectations rest to keep up the
 ‘ Name of God in the World, when your Pa-
 ‘ rents

rents Heads are laid in the Grave. We hope you will not be conformed to the World, in the sinful Customs and Manners which obtain in it, nor *follow a Multitude to do Evil*. You have learned other and better Things. The Eyes of all who wish well to the Interests of Religion are upon you. If you fail us, if you disappoint our reasonable Expectations from you, what can we do? whither can we go? Unless God be pleased to *raise up Children to Abraham* from the Stones! And this in Effect he will do; and bring in the Children of Strangers to himself, if the *Children of the Covenant*, who are blessed with rich Means of Divine Instruction should turn their Backs upon him, and mingle with a profane and sinful World.'——That this may not be the Case any of you, give me leave to observe,

Obs. V. It is peculiarly Criminal in those who *have from Children known the holy Scriptures*, they afterwards forsake the Lord, and grow wicked and profane.

This is but a just Inference from the foregoing heads. For since it is so great an Advantage to be early acquainted with the holy Scriptures, we have seen it is; and since in all Reason may be expected from those who are blessed with this Advantage, that they should be stedfast, and perseveringly Good; it evidently follows,

lows, that the neglecting to improve these Advantages, and the disappointing such reasonable Expectations, must be peculiarly criminal in the Sight of God.

My dear Friends, you can not, therefore, sin at so cheap a Rate, as ignorant and uneducated Children may do: for you must break through more Restraints than others, and offer greater Violence to the Conviction of your own Minds, and do more *Despise to the Spirit of Grace*. To you may be applied, in some Sort, those Words of our blessed Lord, Mat. v. 13. *Ye are the Salt of the Earth; but if the Salt have lost his Savour wherewith shall it be salted? It is therefore good for nothing, but to be trodden under Feet of Men. Them that honour God he will honour, but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.* Sam. ii. 30. And St. Peter tells us, that it is better for Persons not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn aside from the holy Commandment delivered to them, 2 Pet. ii. 21.

It is a frequent Observation, that none are so bad as the wicked Children of pious Parents. And very often does God signify his Displeasure against them, even in this World; and their Sin proves their Ruin. But if they should not suffer in their temporal Interests, God will reckon with them so much the more severely, in the Future State. One Way or other, and at one Time or another, will God make them sensible to their

Cost, that it was an evil and a bitter Thing for them to forsake the Lord their God, and turn aside to crooked Paths.

Wherefore let young People, who have been blessed with a Religious Education, remember, that they are peculiarly concerned to improve it; as they tender the Honour of God, and their own present or eternal Happiness, let them not run counter to the Bias of a good Education. *My son, if Sinners intice thee, consent thou not; but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long, and all thy Life long; and you will find the Infinite Advantage of it.* If I should be now speaking to any who have unhappily departed from the pious Instructions of their Parents or Teachers, let me beseech you, with all Earnestness, to remember from whence you are fallen, and repent. Believe it, you are running headlong into Precipices and Dangers; and, if the Grace of God do not stop your Career, the Issue will be dreadful. The Pleasures of Sin are deceitful, and its Wages Death. What Reason can you possibly have to offend God, and break your Parents Hearts; and all this only to procure Ruin and Misery to yourselves, probably in this World, but certainly in the World to come?—But I forbear,—and proceed to make another Observation from the Words.

Obs. VI. No other Knowledge, whatsoever, can compensate for the Want of knowing the

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holy Scriptures. For these are they that *make us wise unto Salvation.*

Our Saviour puts a very moving Question to his Disciples, Mat. xvi. 26. *What is a Man profited, if he should gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* And I might in like Manner put the Question to you, my Friends, and ask you, what will your Children be profited, if they should gain the Knowledge of every Thing in the World, and remain ignorant of the holy Scriptures? What will it signify for them to be acquainted with the several Parts of Learning, to be taught the most refined Manners and handsomest Address, and to be furnished with all other Accomplishments you can think of; if, at the same Time, they know not God, nor the Things that relate to their eternal Salvation. Learning, Politeness, and the Knowledge of the World (as it is called,) in short the whole Circle of Arts and Sciences, if estimated in the Balance of true Reason, will not, cannot, make amends for the Want of knowing the holy Scriptures. And that for this plain Reason suggested in the Text; because it is the Knowledge of the Scriptures that alone can *make us wise unto Salvation.* Religion is the brightest Ornament of a reasonable Creature, and the only Principle of Happiness either here or hereafter. A Man may be learned, he may be genteel, he may be

rich

rich; but if he be not also religious he cannot be happy.

You do not suppose, by what I have said, that I am an Enemy to Learning and good Manners. No, let Children and young Persons have all the Accomplishments that their Circumstances in Life will admit of; but I would by no Means have these purchas'd at the Hazard of their best Interests, nor at the Expence of that Wisdom which is *unto Salvation*. I would not have the more needful Knowledge of the Things of God neglected.—I would hope Parents, and Governours of Families, will improve these Hints in the Education of their Children, and in disposing of them out in the World. Or, if they should be so inconsiderate as to neglect it and act contrary to it, I pray God to give their Children so much Wisdom as to prefer the Knowledge of the Scriptures to all other Knowledge; and, whatever else they pursue, not to neglect the Things which relate to Salvation.

I will only make one Reflection more,

Obf. VII. From hence it appears how much is the Duty of all Christian Parents, and Heads of Families, to teach their Children the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures.

You owe this to God and your Children; nor can you teach them any Thing that will be of equal Advantage. You have, before you in our

Text, the Example of *Timothy's* Mother and Grand-mother, early instructing him in the sacred Writings; and their happy Success should be your Encouragement.

You cannot but remember what solemn and repeated Charges God gave the People of the Jews, not only to read the Law themselves, but to teach it *diligently to their Children*; see particularly, Deut. vi. 7. xi. 19. And to this very Day do they train up their Children to the reading and studying of the Law from their Infancy.—*Josephus*, speaking of his Countrymen the Jews, says, ‘Ask one of our Nation concerning the Law, he will tell you all Things more readily than his own Name; for learning them as soon as we come to have any Knowledge of Things, we preserve them deeply engraven on our Minds.’—An Example this, worthy to be followed by Christian Parents!

But I would remember that I am this Day chiefly to address myself to young Persons; to whom therefore I turn myself: and shall spend the Remainder of this Discourse in suggesting to you a few short Rules and Directions, which I apprehend may be useful to regulate your younger Converses with the Word of God; that so you may more happily from thence derive that Wisdom which *will make you wise unto eternal Salvation*.

I did, indeed, design, before I came to these Directions, to have recommended the holy Scriptures

tures to your early Regard from some Considerations proper to that Purpose, and particularly from the three following, which are suggested in the Text and Context; *viz.*—The Divine Original of them, being *given by Inspiration of God*:—The happy efficacy of them, being *able to make us wise unto Salvation*:—And the extensive Usefulness and Benefit of them:—seeing *they are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; and are sufficient to furnish us, and thoroughly to furnish us, unto all good Works.*—But I find myself obliged to drop this Part of my Scheme, lest I make the Service tedious.

The Directions I would recommend to you are such as these.

Direct. I. *Converse most with the easiest and plainest Parts of holy Writ.*

Such, for Instance, are the Historical Books of the Old and New Testament; and particularly, the Life and Actions of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, recorded in the four *Evangelists* and the *Acts*. To these may be added a good Part of the Book of *Psalms*, the *Proverbs* of Solomon, and other Books of that Kind, which abound with moral Instructions and devotional Reflections: and I cannot but think it would be a very wise and kind Part, in Parents or Tutors, to point out to Children the most proper and useful Porti-

ons of Scripture, which they should from Time to Time converse with, and not leave them to read any where as the Book opens, or Chance directs; by which means they will probably be as often amused and puzzled, as edified and instructed. Milk is the most proper and wholesome Diet for Children, and not strong Meat; I allude to what the Apostle saith, *Heb. v. 12.* The more abstruse and difficult Parts of Scripture, may be reserved till they grow up to riper Judgment, and their Capacities are strengthened and improved by Years and Reflection.

Direct. II. Endeavour as much as you can to understand what you read; to enter into the Sense and Spirit of the sacred Writers.

I fear many young Persons want Admonition upon this Head; who satisfy themselves with the mere reading of a Chapter in Scripture, without attending to the Sense of it, or making it any Part of their Care to understand it. But how should the Scriptures be useful to you if you do not understand them? Thus much is plainly implied in *Philip's* Question to the *Eunuch*, who was travelling in his Chariot and reading Part of the Prophecy of *Isaiab*, *Acts viii. 30.* *understandest thou what thou readeest?* Suffer me, therefore, to exhort you not to let the Words of Scripture slide over your Tongue without any Meaning affixed to them. But get Ideas to the Words; and,

much

much as may be, the very same Ideas that the Writers themselves had. Your Knowledge can extend no further than your Ideas. Dont read the Scriptures as a Parrot would speak them; but read them with a Desire and Endeavour to understand them. To which Purpose you should use yourselves to think on what you read; and, where you are at a Loss, ask Assistance of your Parents or other Friends that may be capable of informing you; and compare one place of Scripture with another, and use all proper Means of informing your Judgements.

Direct. III. I would advise you to fix, if you could, the Substance of what you read in your Memories, that it may be ready for Use upon every Occasion.

Your Memories are now strong and vigorous, and will become more and more so by proper Use and Exercise: and there is sure no more valuable Treasure that you can lay up in those Store-Houses, than a Collection of the chief Doctrines, and Duties, and Histories of the holy Scriptures. Though I cannot forbear adding, at the same Time, that I do not apprehend it adviseable for Parents and Tutors to burden the Minds of Children, with large and long Lessons of Scripture to be got by Heart; which may probably give them a Disgust to such Things when they grow up. But what I have said upon this Head

I have

I have directed to Children themselves, that it may be their own free Act and Deed, done out of Choice, and not as a Task enjoined them by their Superiors. And they will please to remember too, that I have only recommended to them to commit to Memory the *Substance* of what they read, without being over solicitous to remember the very Words themselves. And, with these Restrictions, I hope the advice given may be proper and useful.

Direct. IV. Take particular Notice of what you find, in the Course of your reading, that is in a particular Manner suitable to your own Case and Circumstances.

If you meet with any Passage of Scripture that much affects you, any Example that strikes your Minds, and is peculiarly fitted to direct or animate you, do not presently lose Sight of it; but turn it over and over again in your Thoughts, till you have got it impressed on your Heart. And I believe you would find it very useful to you to take a Memorandum in Writing of such Passages, which you might consult upon Occasion afterwards. By this Method you would secure yourselves the greatest and most lasting Advantage from them.

Direct. V. Make Conscience of reading some or other Portion of Scripture every Day.

In the Law of the Lord should you meditate Day and Night, Psal. i. 2. As I hope none of you live without daily Prayer to God; so if your Time and Circumstances will admit of it, I would recommend it to you, to make the reading of the scriptures a constant Part of your daily Devotions.

Direct. VI. Read with a View to Practice; to improve your Minds, and better your Lives.

It is prettily said by a certain Writer, 'That in reading the Scriptures we should not imitate the curious Astronomer, but the Sailor; who views the Heavens and the Constellations, not to find there new Appearances and new Stars never before discovered, but, to direct him in his Voyage to the Haven he would be at.' So should you converse with the sacred Oracles, not merely to amuse yourselves with agreeable Speculations, but that you may grow *wise unto Salvation*, by them. Read continually with an honest and hearty Desire of becoming wiser and better by what you read.

Direct. VII. I would recommend it to you to make the Scriptures the frequent Subject of your Conversation with each other.

Talk over with one another the Things which you meet with in your Bibles. This is the

the Way to make the Scriptures more familiar to you, and to impress the Contents of them upon your Minds and Memories. You would thus edify and improve each other. I should think this would be the most agreeable Kind of Conversation; and sure I am, it would be the most profitable. The Bible contains an inexhaustible Fund of Matter for entertaining and improving Discourse.

Direct. VIII. And *Lastly*, Let all your Study of the holy Scriptures be accompanied with fervent Prayers to God for the sanctifying Illuminations of his holy Spirit.

Pray with *David*, Psal. cxix. 18. *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may see wondrous Things out of thy Law. Make me to understand the Way of thy Precepts*, ver. 27. *Thou art good and doest good: teach me thy Statutes*, ver. 68. And, with the Apostle *Paul* in behalf of his *Ephesian* and *Colossian* Converts, that the God of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Father of Glory, would give you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him; the Eyes of your understanding being enlightened; and that you may be filled with the Knowledge of his Will in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding: and so may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledge of God. see Eph. i. 18, 19. and Col. i. 9, 10.—

any of you lack *Wisdom* let him ask it of God (the Father of Lights and Fountain of Knowledge) who giveth to all *Men* liberally, and upbraideth not, James i. 5. The Scriptures themselves, divine as they are, will not make you wise unto Salvation without the teachings of the holy Spirit.

These are some of the principal Directions which I have to offer to you, my young Friends, about the Manner of your conversing with the Holy Scriptures. And I perswade myself that through the Divine Blessing) the Observation of them would be very useful to you, and be a happy Means of rendering the Word of God a Mountain of saving Wisdom to your Souls.

To close all; I hope I now leave you, my young Friends, with Sentiments of Love and Esteem for the sacred Writings, and with Resolutions to converse more frequently and affectionately with them. If any of you have heretofore neglected such Studies, I would earnestly treat you to remain no longer guilty of such neglect. But apply yourselves, from this Day forward, to the diligent and conscientious Practice of what hath now been recommended to you. Let this Book of God be much in your Hands, labour also to get it written in your Hearts, and transcribed into your Lives!

It would be a sad Thing to perish with the Book of Life in your Hands! To have that which was designed to guide you to Heaven, become, through your Disregard and Neglect of it,

it, the Occasion of your aggravated Condemnation in Hell! For, if the Gospel do not make you *wise unto Salvation*, and be not a *Savour of Life unto Life* to you, it will assuredly prove a *Savour of Death unto Death*. Better would it have been for you never to have heard of such a Divine Revelation as your Bible contains, than, having been favoured with the Light and Grace of it, to run counter to its Authority and Command, and oppose its chief Design.

God will ask you at the great Day——‘ What
 ‘ did you do with that holy Book I sent you to
 ‘ shew you the Way to please me, and be eternally happy?’ And if Conscience can give no other Answer than this,——‘ Lord, I acknowledge that I had that Book indeed in my
 ‘ Hands, but I did not much care to read it
 ‘ and though I did now and then converse with it,
 ‘ yet I could not find in my Heart to follow
 ‘ its Instructions, but pursued my own Inclinations, and the Customs of a vain and wicked
 ‘ World, notwithstanding all the Remonstrances of thy Word to the Contrary!’——What Answer can you expect to such a Declaration but a Denunciation of Divine Wrath? *Depart from me ye cursed!* —— But If you are able to say; ‘ Lord, I seriously and daily conversed with thy holy Word; I thankfully received the Light thereof, and thence I endeavoured, to form my Faith and my Manners, that I might walk so as to please thee——’

When will God say, — ‘ *Well done, good and faithful Servant! Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Now possess the Salvation thou didst there read of; now see the happy Effect of resigning to the **Divine Conduct**; now be for ever happy.’



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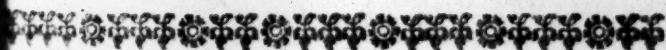


*Of the Unreasonableness and Uncomfortableness of
Living without God in the World.*

S E R M O N IV.

P R E A C H E D

SEPTEMBER 26, 1744.



IV.



RECEIVED

SEPTEMBER 26 1744



EPH. ii. 12.

-----*And without God in the World.*

AS most Persons generally go on through Life in the Way in which they set out at first, I would fain perswade you, my young Friends, to begin Life with God. And in order to engage you so to do, I intend to set before you the extreme Unreasonableness and Unhappiness of *Living without God in the World*. Let me beseech your serious Attention, as I would earnestly implore the Divine blessing, that *my Labour may not this Day be in vain in the Lord*.

The Apostle, in the Verse of which our Text is the concluding Clause, is reminding the Gentile Converts of their former unhappy State and Circumstances before the Gospel came among them: that he might make them more sensible of, and more deeply affected with, the exceeding Grace of God towards them in Jesus Christ; which had made so happy an Alteration in their Case. *Wherefore remember* (saith he ver. 11.)

that ye being in Time past Gentiles in the Flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the Flesh made by Hands; (that is, by the Jews who gloried in this Token of the Covenant of Peculiarity made with their Nation, and treated with Scorn and Contempt the uncircumcised Gentiles;) Remember (saith the Apostle) that at that Time ye were without Christ, ver. 12. without any Knowledge of a Saviour; without any Expectation of his coming, which the Jews had to whom the Oracles of God were committed; being Aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel, which was the peculiar People of God, and among whom he resided as their God and their King; and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise; which Covenants were made with Abraham and his Seed, and contained many important Promises of various Blessings, and eminently the Promise of the great Messiah: and being thus Aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, it is no wonder that the Apostle further adds, having no Hope: no just and well grounded Hope of the Forgiveness of their Sins, or of a future State of Happiness; having no solid Support under the Troubles of Life, or in the Views of Death. He adds still further to complete the Description of their Unhappiness, and as a compendious Abridgement of every Thing that could be said to aggravate their Wretchedness, and without God in the World. — The Origin

nal Word strictly imports *Atheists in the World*, (a). And so in some sort they might be called. Not as Disbelievers of a Deity; for they had Gods in abundance, such as they were, to whom they paid divine Worship, but as Strangers to the one only living and true God: who was to the greater Part of the Heathens an *unknown God*.— But as the Apostle, in the Verse where the Text is, is describing not so much the Character as the State of the Gentiles before their Conversion to the Gospel of Christ, I think our Translators have rendered it very properly, *without God in the World*: or without any Interest in his Favour and Friendship. They were in a sort abandoned of God for their Sins and Transgressions; and stood exposed to his Wrath and Vengeance.— Miserable and wretched State indeed!

They did not *like to retain God in their Knowledge*, or desire any Converse or Acquaintance with him; and God accordingly withheld the Manifestation of his Presence and Favour from them. The Consequence of which could not be other than Wretchedness and Misery to them. For *Wo to that Man*, or that Person, *from whom God is departed*, Hof. ix. 12.

I may be permitted to consider this *Living without God in the World*, both as a *Fault*, and an *Unhappiness*; though its chiefly in the last Sense that the Apostle seems to speak of it in the Text. And it will be more allowable for me so to do, be-

(a) Ἀθεοὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

because, in the present Case, the Fault and the Unhappiness are inseparably connected together; and the *latter* arises from the *former*; and is in the Nature of Things, and the righteous Judgment of God, more or less, a certain Consequence of it.

In further speaking to the Words of the Apostle, in the Latitude in which I propose to consider them, the better to accommodate them to the present Purpose, I shall represent in some Instances when we may be said to *Live without God in the World*. And as I go along will endeavour to convince you of the *Unreasonableness* and *Uncomfortableness* of such a Course of Life. That by the united Consideration of the *Impiety* and *Infidelity* that attends it, you may be excited, by the Grace of God, to resolve that, whatever others do, you will not Live without him in the World.

Now I think we may be said to *Live without God in the World* in the following Cases.

I. When we are inattentive to the *Display of the Divine Existence and Perfections in the Work of Creation*.

The World is, as it were, the Theatre on which the great God is continually exhibiting Manifestations of himself to all Intelligent Spectators. *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth forth his handy Work;*

Day

Day unto Day uttereth Speech, and Night unto Night sheweth Knowledge. There is no Speech nor Language where their Voice is not heard. Their Line is gone out through all the Earth, and their Words to the End of the World, Psal. xix. beginning. The invisible Things of God, even his Eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly to be seen and understood by the Things which he hath made, Rom. i. 20. Plain Marks and Footsteps of the Divine Power, Wisdom and Goodness, are impressed on the whole visible Creation of God, and shine through all his Works.

But there are those in the World who, though situated in the Midst of all the great and glorious Displays of the Divine Perfections, yet take little or no Notice of them. They go forward, but as to them God is not there, and backward but they do not perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but they do not behold him; He is as it were hidden on the right hand that they do not see him: to accommodate those words of Job with some little variation to the present Case, Job xxiii. 8, 9. God is not in all their Thoughts, though they are continually surrounded with the Notices and Operations of a Divine Being. They consider not that he that built all these Things is God: and have no suitable Impressions upon their Minds of the almighty Power and infinite Wisdom of the great Creator.

But

But wherefore hath God taught us more than the Beasts of the Earth, and made us wiser than the Fowls of the Heaven, if not to teach us to enquire where is God our Maker? Job xxxv. 10, 11. To feel after God and find him, who is not far from any one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our Being, Acts xvii. 28. For what Purposes are we distinguished by superior Faculties from the Brute Creation, if it be not that we might contemplate the Works of God, and adore and praise the great Author of all Things? Abstracted from this, our rational Faculties are in a Manner lost upon us, and God defrauded of that Tribute of Gratitude which he justly expects at our Hands.

Of all the Species of Creatures which God hath made upon Earth, Man is the only one that is framed with Capacities of conversing with his Maker, and giving him the Praise of his Works. And if Man be insensible to God, and will not see the invisible God in the Manifestations of his Perfections, nor praise and adore his almighty Maker, his rational and intellectual Powers are bestowed upon him in vain; and (for any Purposes of God's Honour) he might as well have been made a Brute. And will he not sooner or later resent this, and make us sensible of his Displeasure?

And, in the mean while, what a great deal of Delight and Pleasure must they unavoidably lose who are thus stupidly inattentive to the Works of God.

God, and the Displays of the Divine Perfections! can safely appeal to the Experience of many of my young Hearers this Day, who can testify that their little Acquaintance with the Works of God, and Enquiries into the visible Frame of Nature, have given them a Satisfaction and Pleasure much exceeding the Delights of Sense. And they may assure themselves that their further Searches after God, and the Displays of the Divine Perfections in the Works of Creation, will furnish them with growing Satisfaction, and still increasing Delight. But then, remember, that the chief Design of such Enquiries should be not to gratify the Curiosity of our Minds, but to know and admire, to love and praise God. *The Works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein*; Psal. cxi. 2. and will afford Matter of Admiration and Delight to all Eternity. *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his Greatness is unsearchable. One Generation shall praise thy Works to another, and all shall declare thy mighty Acts. All thy Works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy Saints shall bless thee*; Psal. cxlv. 3, 4, 10.

II. To be unobservant of the *providential* Con-
 duct of God is also to *Live without God in the*
World.

As the great and blessed God made the Hea-
 ven, and the Earth, and all Things that are there-
 in;

in ; so he upholds all Things by the Word of his Power, and the Care of his Providence : and superintends and directs all Affairs, and Events. He is the great Parent of the Universe who sustains the Creatures he hath made, and from whose Bounty their Wants are liberally supplied. *The Eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their respective Food in due Season.* We and all Creatures are intirely dependant on God for Life, and Health, and all Things. He is our daily Preserver and Benefactor. And our Lives are altogether in his Hands. He appoints and directs every Thing that relates to us ; in so much that not a *Hair* of our Heads falls to the Ground without him. For every single Hair is numbered by him, Mat. x. 30. We came into the World at his Command, and at his Appointment we dye out of it. And the intermediate Space is filled up with such Circumstances and Occurrences as he thinks fit to order. *He kills and he makes alive ; He wounds and he heals and out of his Hand none can deliver.* He maketh rich or poor as it pleaseth him. And all the great Affairs of Kingdoms and States, as well as those that relate to Families and particular Persons, are directed by the Council of his Hand. — This is the plain Doctrine of Scripture ; and it is agreeable to Reason, and confirmed by Experience.

But how many are there in the World who leave God quite out of their Account, and

exclude him from the Administration and Direction of human Affairs ! who consider not any of the Operations of his Hands, *Isai. v. 12.* either towards themselves or others ! who ascribe to an imaginary Chance or blind Fate every Thing that befalls them, without any Sense of the over-ruling Providence of God ; or *Sacrifice to their own Net, or burn Incense to their own Drag, if their Portion be fat or their Meat plenty ; to speak in the Language of the Prophet, Habbak. i. 16 :* but, in the plainer Language of *Moses, Deut. viii. 17, 18.* who say in their Hearts, *my Power and the Might of my Hand hath gotten me this Wealth, and remember not the Lord their God, or at all consider that it is he that giveth Power to get Wealth.* They act as if they had no Dependance on God, and prosecute their schemes without any Regard to him ; who say, *To Day or to Morrow we will go to such a Place, and continue there, and buy and sell and get gain : without interposing that religious Parenthesis (if the Lord will,) or without having any becoming Sense of their Dependance on his Protection, Providence, and Blessing, see James iv. 7.* and following : who enjoy Health, or pass through Scenes of Sickness and Pain, without considering the Hand of God ; who meet, it may be, with very eminent Deliverances and preservations from eminent Dangers in the Course of Life, but are not sensible of any Divine Interposu-

terposal, nor affected with the Divine Mercy towards them.

But how impious is this! and how often hath the great Governour of the Universe severely animadverted upon it, and forced the greatest of earthly Monarchs to confess, (with *Nebuchadnezzar* the proud King of *Babylon*) that *the most High ruleth in the Kingdoms of Men, and appointeth over them whomsoever he will: and, that he doth according to his Will, in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth; and none can stay his Hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?* Dan. iv. 32, 35. and v. 21.

It is monstrous Absurdity, for a Creature to imagine itself independant on its Creator; and no less Folly to affect to be so; especially such a poor Creature as Man, whose Wants and Infirmities are so pressing and notorious; and who would become immediately miserable, if not sustained and upheld by the providential Hand of God. It argues great Blindness not to see, and great Impiety not to believe, a Divine Providence, which watches over us, supplies our Wants, and directs all Events which befall ourselves or others. *The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice: let the Multitude of Isles be glad thereof,* Psal. xcvi. 1.

Let me, therefore, beseech my young Friends to begin Life, with a religious Acknowledgement and a careful Observation of the over-ruling Providence of God. Own the Hand of God in every Thing; and observe his Dealings and Dis-

penfations. View him as ordering and appointing your Circumstances and Situation in Life. This will enable you to comport with the Designs of God in every Part of his Conduct towards you, and will lay a Foundation of Peace and Comfort in your Minds under all Events; when you confider every Thing that befalls you as directed and appointed by an infinitely wife and good God, who hath promifed that *all Things fhall work together for good, to them that love him.* But when Divine Providence is either difowned, or difregarded, all the Occurrences of it are loft upon us; nither Mercies nor Afflictions can answer their Ends: our Spirits muft perpetually fluctuate, and be tossed with various Paflions, having no folid Principle of Hope and Reft.

Indeed the denial of a Providence is, at once, to rob God of his Dominion over us, and ourfelves of one of the chief Supports and Comforts of Life. *Acknowledge God in all thy Ways, and he fhall direct thy Paths,* Prov. iii. 6. *Whofo is wife and will obferve thefe Things, even he fhall underftand the loving Kindnefs of the Lord,* Pfal. cxvii. 43. *But if we regard not the Works of the Lord, nor the Operations of his Hands, he will deftroy us and not build us up,* Pfal. xxviii. 5.

III. To live without any Regard to the Discoveries and Revelations of God's Word, is another Senfe of *Living without him in the World.*

Besides the Books of *Nature* and *Providence*, (which were the only Books the Gentiles enjoyed for the Knowledge of God) he hath been pleased to favour us with the Books of *Scripture*; in which he hath discovered more of Himself, his Nature, Perfections, and the Counsels of his Will relating to our Duty and our Happiness, than what could possible be collected from the Light of unassisted Reason. He *spoke* in *Times past*, at *sundry Times*, and in *divers Manners*, by his *Prophets*, whose inspired Writings make up what we call the OLD TESTAMENT; and in *these last Days* he hath condescended to speak unto us by his *own Son* incarnate, who came from the Bosom of the Father; and hath imparted such Discoveries of the Divine Will, as *Eye never saw before*, nor *Ear heard*, neither could enter into the Heart of Man to conceive. We have these Discoveries of the Son of God collected and represented in the NEW TESTAMENT. And both these, in Conjunction, make up that Divine Book which we call the *Bible*. And if we have any Reverence for God, or any Regard to the Peace and Comfort of our own Minds, and the everlasting Salvation of our Souls, we shall, with Seriousness and Thankfulness, apply ourselves to converse Daily with these fabled Fountains of Divine Wisdom, Truth, and Grace.

But what Numbers of Persons are there that seldom or never look into their Bibles! that call

God

God's Laws behind their Back ; and say, in Effect, as the proud King of *Egypt* heretofore said, *who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice ?* Exod. v. 2. God hath written to us the great Things of his Law and Gospel, but they count them as a strange Thing, Hos. viii. 12. what they have little or no Converse with. They, for their Parts, have no need of Divine Instruction, neither care they what their Bible contains. And with many it is not only a neglected Book, but ridiculed also : and the chief use made of it, is to furnish matter for a profane Jest.

God forbid, my young Friends, that you should ever be betrayed into such Profaneness ! It's ill jesting with edged Tools ; and they that think themselves most witty in droling upon the Bible will find that they have been cutting and wounding their own Souls. The Bible is the Book of God, and who shall not attend when God speaks ? and is written, not so much to display the Divine Authority over us, in prescribing Laws for our Conduct, as to testify the Divine Grace to us : to teach and instruct us in those Things which we are most concerned to know ; such as the Nature and Perfections of God ; the Manner of worshipping him acceptably ; the Method of obtaining the Forgiveness of our sins, and Peace and Friendship with him thro' his Mediator ; and how we may live in this World, as to hope and prepare for a better, whenever God shall call us hence.

Are not these, and the like Subjects, of the last Importance for us to be acquainted with? And can any teach us them like to God? To live therefore without any suitable Regard to this Book of God, is certainly to *Live without God in the World.*

And this will be found to be an *Unhappiness*, as well as a Fault. For what sacred Pleasure have holy Souls found in conversing with the Divine Oracles! What Light hath sprung in upon their Minds! What Joy hath arisen in their Hearts from the wonderful Things there contained! The Scripture hath been a *Light unto their Feet, and a Lamp unto their Path.* It hath been their Monitor, and their Comforter too. *Through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures* they have had Hope in the darkest Scenes of Life, and in the Views and Agonies of Death. They would not have been without their Bible for all the Treasures upon Earth.

Let me therefore, beseech my young Friends, this Day, to love their Bibles: and to converse seriously and constantly with them. You will find unspeakable Benefit and Comfort from so doing. *Wherewith shall a young Man cleanse his Way? by taking heed thereto according to thy Word.* Psal. cxix. 9. Timothy, from a Child, had known and been conversant with the holy Scriptures. 2 Tim. iii. 15.

And here let me observe, that God hath been pleased to accommodate the sacred Scriptures

the general Taste of Mankind, especially of younger Persons; by making a great Part of them to consist in historical Passages, to allure us to the reading of them. And, I will venture to say, there are no Stories in all the World more entertaining and delightful, than those which are recorded in holy Writ; Pleasure and Profit here go Hand in Hand.

IV. To live without any serious Intercourse with God by *Prayer*, is emphatically to *Live without God in the World.*

And what a Number will be found guilty when tryed by this Rule! If I now speak to any such, I am perswaded your Consciences smite you for that Neglect. A Neglect, that will admit of no excuse in any that are grown up to the Exercise of Reason, and are capable of knowing any Thing of God and themselves. Is it not obvious to the meanest Understanding that, as we depend intirely upon God for *Life and Breath and all Things*, it is a most reasonable Service that we should actually own that Dependance; and pay our Homage to the great Father of our Being, and Fountain of our Blessings? that we should repair to the Throne of his Grace, and humbly ask at his Hands the good Things we want, and deprecate the Evils which we fear, and testify our Gratitude in thankful Acknowledgment of his Favours?

But,

But, evident as this Duty may appear, how many live in the neglect of it! They rise up and lye down, from Day to Day and Night to Night, without any serious Sense of God upon their Minds: taking little or no Notice of God, as if he had nothing to do with them, nor they with him. Or, if they are not guilty of such an entire and absolute Forgetfulness of God, yet their Addresses to him are so short and so seldom, and hurried over with so little understanding or real Devotion, that they scarce deserve the Name of Prayer.

But I hope, my young Friends, you do not thus live without God in the World. I persuade myself, many of you do not, and cannot. And indeed, what miserable Creatures should we be if we had not a God to go to! What could we do in a Thousand Cases in Life, if we were not to fetch Relief from Heaven by serious Prayer? And especially what shall we be able to do at Death, if we have through Life estranged ourselves from God; and have not accustomed ourselves to *pour out our Hearts* before him as a *Refuge*.

And what a noble Work is it to employ ourselves in Acts of Praise! (For I comprehend Praise as well as Petition under the general Name of *Prayer* in this Place) what a noble employment is it (I say) to Praise God! It is the Work of Heaven: It is the Employment of the Blessed above. And how shall we hope ever to arrive

at that State of Blessedness, if we never accustom ourselves to attempt the Praises of God on Earth? The Favours of Providence, and the rich Blessings of Grace, will furnish unexhaustable Materials for Praise.

In a Word, every Day hath its Wants, its Difficulties, its Duties, and its Mercies too. *So every Day should we be found entering into our Closets, paying suitable Devotion to our Maker *which sees in Secret* in the Name of Jesus. We should indeed endeavour to avoid a vain Ostentation of our Piety and Devotion, but we should never be ashamed of being Worshippers of God; whether in the Church, the Family, or the Closet.—Upon the Mention of Family Devotion, suffer me to recommend to you, my young Friends, a solemn Regard to this when the Providence of God shall settle you in Families of your own. Do what you can that your Houses may not be prayerless, nor your Families Live as *without God in the World.*——It is the Honour of our Natures that we are made capable of conversing with God; and our Wisdom and Comfort, as well as our Duty, to keep up continual Intercourse with Him. It is the Way to derive a Blessing upon you in all the Circumstances and Scenes of Life. Nor is it possible, in the Nature of Things, that there should be any real Religion where there is no Intercourse with God by Prayer. And it is one of the most evident Proofs of the melancholy Degeneracy and
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Corruption of Mankind, that there should be such a Disinclination and a sort of Aversion, prevailing in the Breast of a great Part of the human Race, to any such serious Intercourse with God.

V. *To Live without God in the World* may import, Living without any Care to *Pleaze* and *Glorify* God.

And how common a Thing is this! Men live only to themselves, and study their own Pleasures, and the Gratification of their own Fancies and Humours, without any serious Thought of God. They dont ask themselves, in one and another Point of Conduct, *will this please God? is this agreeable to the Will of God?* Shall I herein glorify or offend God? Alas! God is not in all their Thoughts, as if it was a Matter of no great Concern, whether the great God be pleased or displeased by them. But can you think in your Hearts that this is really an indifferent Thing; a Matter of no Moment? Is the blessed God, your Maker, your Governor, your Judge, (is He, I say,) only a Cypher in your Account? does his Approbation or Disapprobation signify nothing with you? The pious *Joseph* did not think so; who, when solicited to the impure Embraces of his *Egyptian* Mistress, rejected the Proposal with Horror, saying; *How shall I do this great Wickedness, and Sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. God will one Day make

you sensible of the infinite Importance of his Favour; and that it was of more Consequence to please him than to please the whole Creation beside; and will severely reckon with Mankind for the Indignities cast upon him.

O, my young Friends, let it be your chief Solicitude to please and glorify God. Make his Will the sacred Rule, and his Glory the supreme End, of all your Actions. *They that so honour him, he will honour; but such as despise him, shall sooner or later be themselves lightly esteemed.* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

VI. The Persons who, in the Senses above mentioned, *Live without God in the World*, must of Consequence be supposed to live without any Interest in the Favour of God.

And what a dreadful Thing is that! the Favour of God is Life; and his Loving-Kindness better and sweeter than Life itself: it is the Spring of all Blessedness, and the Earnest of eternal Life. But the Divine Favour is too sacred and important a Thing to be thrown away upon Creatures that value it not, and are not capable of relishing the Pleasures of it. *The righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, and his Countenance becometh the Upright: but the Workers of Iniquity his Soul abhors.* Nor can a holy God take pleasure in Wickedness.

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It is evident we must be happy or miserable as God stands affected to us. Because all are dependant upon him for their Being, and for every Thing that can make it comfortable.

What Felicity is involved in being in a State of Favour and Friendship with God through Jesus Christ! This will make a little of the World much safer and sweeter than all the Treasures of the *Indies* without it. 'God is reconciled to me' in Jesus Christ. The great and blessed God is 'my Father and my Friend.' How refreshing the Thought! It adds unknown Sweetness to all the Mercies and Comforts of Life; and takes away the Chief Sting from all Troubles and Afflictions of it. But its enough to make any Man's Heart ach, seriously to reflect, that, whatever his outward Circumstances may be, yet he hath no Interest in the Favour of God; but is under the Displeasure of the supreme Governour of Heaven and Earth: who can in a Moment strip him of all his Enjoyments, and *cast both Soul and Body into Hell, where the Worm dyeth not, and the Fire is not quenched.*

For a Man to walk up and down in the World, without any Sense or Hope of the favourable Regards of Almighty God towards him, must needs make him be in a very unhappy and disconsolate State, if he reflects. And were it not that Men are thoughtless of the true State of their Souls, and unapprehensive of the sad Issue of Things, at last, they would not be able to endure them-

selves.

elves. It is true, God does not, in this World, pour out the Vials of his Wrath upon the *Children of Disobedience*. He is long suffering and gracious, not willing that they should perish, but that they should come to Repentance and be saved. Nevertheless he is angry with the *Wicked every Day*. And if they turn not, he will at length whet his glittering Sword, and his Hand will be bold of Judgment. He will take Vengeance on his Enemies and recompence them that hate him: as it is expressed, Deut. xxxii. 41.

Can any of you, my young Friends, bear the Thoughts of *Living without God in the World*, in the Sense now mentioned? living without any Interest in the Favour of God? I hope you will make it your chief Care to secure this, and to preserve it. You are made for ever; you obtain it; and must be eternally undone, without it. And, (adored be the Grace of God!) he is, in Christ Jesus, willing to confer it upon those that are heartily desirous of it, and who comply with the prescribed Means of obtaining

And upon none will his Favour descend more easily, or more plentifully, than upon such who consecrated their early Days to him. They that seek him early, will, above all others, be the more sure to find him; Prov. viii. 17. They will enjoy distinguishing Marks of the Divine Favour. With what Pleasure and Comfort may they approach to God, from Time to Time, and cast all their Care upon him who careth for

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them!

them! They may hope for his Presence and Blessing with them at all Times, and in all Places where his Providence may cast their Lot: may expect his gracious Direction of all their Steps, and suitable Support and Consolation under all the Trials and Burdens of Life. And *when their flesh and Heart fail*, they shall find their God fail them not; but he will be *the Strength of their Heart, and their Portion for ever* in Jesus Christ.—But this leads me to add, yet further, which is the last Thing I shall mention;

VII. That to be *without Hope of being brought to the Enjoyment of God in a better World*, is one of the sad Things implied in the Expression of *Being without God in this*.

This was the Case of the poor *Gentiles*, in the Text, before the Grace of the Gospel came to their Relief. They were *dead in Trespasses and Sins*, and, as such, were *without Hope, and without God in the World*: without any Interest in the Covenant Favour of God here; or any Hope of the Enjoyment of God hereafter. For, *if* certain, we can have no ground to Hope, that God will receive us to himself hereafter, *if*, by our Sins, we are excluded from an Interest in his Favour here.

Perhaps this Thought may strike the Minds of such as have been unaffected with all that has been said under the foregoing Heads of this Discourse.

course. It is possible you may imagine, (though the Imagination is vain and groundless) that you can do well enough *without God in the World*. You are not sensible of the Importance of the Divine Favour, with regard to the Comfort, and Happiness, of the present Life: but are ready to fancy, that, you can provide for yourselves, and enjoy Life, as well without God, as with him. But should even this be granted to you; and let us suppose that you could do well enough without God in this World: yet, what will you do, when you come to go out of it? who will receive your departing Spirits? and what will become of your precious, and immortal Souls? When you come to the Confines of the eternal World, and Death looks you in the Face, then you will cry, *Lord have Mercy upon me! O! for an Interest in the Favour of God, through Jesus Christ!* and would give ten thousand Worlds to obtain it. However you may think of *Living without God in the World*, I perswade myself, you cannot sustain the Thought, of *Dying without him* too. And will not this Time surely come? May it not shortly come? May it not come, even before the return of another Day? *This Night thy Soul shall be required of thee.* Your Youth will not exempt, or secure you; have you not seen, and known many Instances of young Persons dying, as well as old? But if Life should be lengthened out a while longer, yet a Period must come. You know its added of *Methuselah* him-

self, the oldest Man that ever lived in the World, *and he dyed.* A few Years, more or less, are of no Consideration, when compared with Eternity.

It is evidently the highest Point of Wisdom, to secure our eternal Happiness. And this is evidently consists in the Enjoyment of God, and the blessedness of his Love for ever. Nothing, short of this, can be a satisfying Portion to a reasonable and immortal Spirit. And can they ever hope for this Happiness who never cultivate Acquaintance with God? who say to the Almighty, *depart from us, we desire not the Knowledge of his Ways.* And what a miserable Case will it be, for a Creature, that knows he must soon dye and appear before the Bar of God, and receive from his Lips a Sentence that will decide his everlasting State, to have no ground to hope for the Divine Favour towards him! but hath Reason to fear that God will punish him with *everlasting Destruction from his Presence*, and consign him over to the Regions of everlasting Misery and Despair!

But, if I have secured my Peace with God, through Jesus Christ; if I have spent my Days in his Faith and Fear, in a Course of Devotedness to God, and obedience to his holy Will; I may comfortably hope, that, after God hath *guided me by his Counsel*, through this World, he will *receive me to his Glory* in a better. Then I need not tremble at the Thoughts of Death, but may bid it welcome; and should it approach in the earliest

earliest Part of my Days, it will only bring me so much sooner to Heaven, and to the Vision and Enjoyment of God. Thus, Life will pass easily and comfortably on, and I need not be anxious about the Period of it; but leave it contentedly to the Determination of infinite Wisdom and Grace, which will ordain it at that Season, which, upon the whole, is fittest and best. Is not this a most desirable State to be in? Can you forbear wishing it to be your own, endeavouring it may be so, if as yet you are a Stranger to it?

And thus I have represented to you, my young Friends, in some plain and practical Instances, how very unreasonable and sad a Thing it is to *Live without God in the World.*—And if you consider what sort of a World this is, in which God hath placed us, it may serve as a further Conviction of the *Impiety* and *Unhappiness* of Living in it without him.——To which Purpose we may consider it in the following Views, which I shall speak briefly to, and then draw this Discourse to a Close.

1. *It is a Divine Fabrick, built and sustained by God.* He laid the Foundations of it, and he hath beautified and adorned the several Parts of it, and fitted it up to be the Seat of such Creatures as we are. It is his Sun that enlightens and warms the Earth: his Stars that glow in the Firmament of Heaven, and raise up our Thoughts to God. By his powerful Blessing the Earth yields

her Increase, the *Vallies are covered over with Corn, and the little Hills rejoice on every side*, Psal. lxxv. 11, 12. There is not a Creature we behold in Earth, or Air, or Sea, but is his Workmanship; and, in a Word, *the Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*.

And is it not most unreasonable, most inexcusable, to live in a World all built by God, and sustained by him, and full of God; and yet to take no Notice of him, nor pay our Homage to him, nor adore and bless him? This is really to affront and despise him.

2. It is a World full of Snares and Temptations. This is the present State of it, since Sin hath entered into it. And there is peculiar Danger of young Persons falling into some or other of the many Snares which attend them; as they are unexperienced, and apt to rush on in Life without that Caution and Prudence, which Persons more advanced in Years may be supposed to have learned. There is, therefore, peculiar Reason, why young Persons should be found imploring the Divine Favour and Guidance, that God may preserve them from entering into Temptation; that he would direct their Steps; and that they should carefully consult the Sacred Oracles, and *take heed to their Ways, according to the Divine Word*.

If you have any Concern for your own safety, you must not, you cannot, live without God.

in a World so full of Snares as that you are now in. If you allow yourselves to live without God, may he not justly forsake you? And, in Consequence of this, you have reason to fear that you will be drawn into some Snare of the Devil, which may be fatal to you. Further,

3. As the World is full of Snares and Temptations, so also is it of *Difficulties* and *Troubles*. You are not apprehensive of this; but imagine, that, when you have got rid of the restraints of Education you will enter upon a Scene of new Pleasure and Delight. But you deceive yourselves, my Friends, if you entertain such Imaginations. Consult the Word of God, and you will find it is there pronounced, that *Man that is born of a Woman, is of few Days and full of Trouble*, Job xiv. 1. that *Vanity* and *Vexation* are the chief Things we are to expect in this World, abstracted from its Reference to another. Consult the Experience of those that have lived longer in the World than you have done; and they will inform you it is quite another sort of State than what your Imaginations have dressed it out: that we are liable to many Sickneses and Distresses in our Bodies, many Disquietudes and Uneasinesses in our Minds; various Perplexities and Difficulties in our Circumstances and Affairs. And such is the uncertain and changeable Nature of every Thing in this World, that what we most delight in, and promise ourselves the greatest

greatest Comfort and Happiness from, may eventually prove the Source of the greatest Affliction to us. If you have known, or observed any Thing in the World, you must yourselves have seen some Instances of these Things.

Now I beseech you, my young Friends, to reflect, how desireable it must be, in such a Situation, to have an Almighty and most kind Friend to have perpetual and constant Recourse to: One on whom you may rely and trust at all Times; and from whom you may derive Relief and Consolation, in all the adverse and uneasy Circumstances of Life. Such a Friend will the blessed God be to you, if you acquaint yourselves with him in Christ Jesus.

But, if you Live without him in the World, you will find yourselves at a great Loss in an Hour of Distress; and will be in Danger, either of quite sinking under your Burden, or, of taking such Methods for your Relief, as will, in the End, make your Case much worse. It is a great Comfort and Satisfaction to have an earthly Friend to speak to and advise with, who will sympathize with us, and is capable and disposed in any Degree to help us, in any Circumstances of Perplexity and Distress. But it is abundantly more so to have an Interest in the Friendship of an heavenly Father; not to say there are Circumstances, and Scenes, in which the wisest and best of our Friends on Earth can afford us no Relief. But there is no imaginable Case that we can possibly

possibly be in, in which God cannot help and relieve us. Let you and I, therefore, in the first Place, endeavour to secure and cultivate an Interest in the Divine Friendship; and never be such Enemies to ourselves, as to live without God, in such a troublesome World as this.——To add yet one Circumstance more,

4. This World is our *Passage-State* to another more important which is to succeed it; and is appointed us as *a State of Trial for Eternity*. That it is only a *Passage-State*, is the Language of Reason, and Scripture, and Experience. And, were it not for the Consideration of a Future State, to which we are destined by our Creator, we might ask, with the *Psalmist*, *wherefore hast thou made all Men in vain?* Psal. lxxxix. 47. For in that Case, the Faculties bestowed upon us, and those unsatiable Desires after Happiness and vast Capacities for it, would be all given in vain, and answer no Purpose worthy our great Maker. It is easily to be deduced, from our very Frame and Make, that we are designed for some Thing greater than any we can attain to in this present World; which, therefore, agreeably to the Doctrines of Scripture, we are led to conceive as only a *Passage-State*. And we know that with regard to this World, we are soon to leave it. And were we to know nothing further, than only that there is some Future State which awaits us

us beyond the Grave, it would greatly concern us to secure the Favour and Guidance of God, and an Interest in his Friendship; which would ensure our Safety in that other State, be it what it will. For we are safe in all States, and must be finally happy, if the great Lord of all Things be our Friend; whereas, without God, we cannot be truly happy in any State, or in any World.

But, what adds infinite Weight to the Case before us is, the Consideration that this World is not only a *Passage-State to another*, but a *State of Trial for Eternity*. That we are to be happy or miserable for ever in the next World, according to our Behaviour in this. Do not deceive yourselves, *God is not mocked; whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he reap: He that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting*, Gal. vi. 7, 8. O! fix but this solemn Truth upon your Minds, and it will be in a Manner impossible that you should *Live without God in the World*.

Often think with yourselves, what a Situation you are placed in. ‘ Here I am upon my Trial for Eternity! My eternal Happiness or Misery depends upon my present Conduct! And Shall not this awful Consideration excite me to a serious regard to my Behaviour and Walk? Shall I waste my Time in Vanity and Folly when a whole Eternity is at Stake? Shall I live in a neglect of God, and without any Repentance?’

to please him, and secure his final Approbation, when I am soon to pass into an eternal World, which will take its Colour from my Behaviour in this? No, by the Grace of God, I will endeavour so to live and walk here, as that I may secure eternal Felicity hereafter through the Merits of my Redeemer.'

O! my young Friends, it is the Consideration of this Situation we are in, with reference to Eternity, that makes Life so important, and Death so awful. Life must be important, to one to whom its assigned as the only Time of his Probation for an eternal State; and Death awful, as it puts a Period to his probatory State, and fixes his Condition for a long Eternity.

And, in as much as Life is very uncertain, you are infinitely concerned to begin to *Live* betimes, to live in the best Sense; to live like reasonable Creatures and like Christians: that so, whenever your State of Trial shall determine, and you are called to give up your Accounts, you may be able to do it *with Joy and not with Grief*: and may have the infinite Satisfaction of hearing it pronounced upon your Heads, by the Voice of the supreme Judge, *well done, good and faithful Servants, enter ye into the Joy of your Lord.*

But I must draw to a Close.—The whole scope and Drift of the present Discourse, and of all the Exhortations contained in it, hath been in effect only this: *That you should so live in this World, as that you may be eternally happy when you come*

come to go out of it. This you can never be, if you *Live without God in the World.* This you assuredly will attain through *Jesus Christ*, if you consecrate yourselves to God, and spend your Days in a Course of humble and dutiful walking with him.

I perswade myself many of my young Friends have already begun so to do. And that you cannot bear to think of Living without him in the World. You have a Sense of God upon your Minds, a Veneration and awe of the Divine Majesty; and a solicitude to please and approve yourselves to him: that you entertain daily Inter-course with God by Prayer, and observe his Providence, and read his Word; and, in Consequence of these Dispositions of your Soul toward God, you find some Comfortable Hope of his Favour through *Jesus Christ*.—May God confirm and establish you more and more! And when you come out into the World, may you be found still walking with God! Let not the Sense of God which now possesses you ever wear off.—*Watch and Pray that you enter not into Temptation.* And be assured of this, that if you do not wickedly forsake God, *he will never leave nor forsake you.* You will find that a Course of Religion will more and more enlarge and ennoble your Faculties; will make you greatly useful to the World, and Blessings to the Places where you live; will be your true Support under the Troubles of Life and in the Views of Death, and your best Prepa-

Preparation for the State of heavenly Happiness above.

But are there none of my young Friends, that hear me this Day, with whom the Case is otherwise; and to whom the Words in the Text, (*without God in the World,*) may truly be applyed? O that the Considerations which have this Day been offered, to shew you both the *Unreasonableness* and *Uncomfortableness* of such a state, may make deep Impressions on your Minds; and become the happy Means, under God, of producing a Change in your Souls and State! Will you not resolve, by the Grace of God, that from this Day forward, you will no more live *without God in the World*? May God inspire your Hearts with such Resolutions, and enable you to put them into Practice! This will render this very memorable Day to you; and you will confess that you never knew what it was *to live* before. For that does not deserve the Name of Life where God is left out. The truest and noblest Life is living to God, living for God, and preparing to live for ever with God in Heaven.

Let me only add, it is more criminal for any of you to *Live without God in the World*, than it was in the poor Heathens; since you enjoy the sight of a Divine Revelation, which they were strangers to at the Time the Apostle refers to in the Text. And besides, many of you have enjoyed happy Advantages for Knowledge and Piety in the Course of your Education, and are

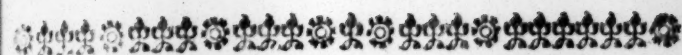
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Descendants of those who truly fear God. So that if, with all your Advantages, you still live as the Heathens, even *without God in the World*, your Guilt will be greater, and your future Punishment more severe.

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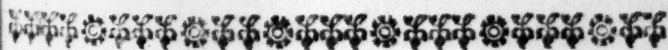


*The Sin, and Mischief, of Loving Pleasures
more than God.*

S E R M O N V.

P R E A C H E D

OCTOBER 17, 1739.







2 TIM. iii. 4.

—— *Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers
of God.*

WHEN I read such a Passage as this to
you, my young Friends, to whom I am
this Day more particularly to address
myself, I would not, by any Means,
have you consider it as a *Charge*, which I am
preparing to draw up against you ; but only as a
friendly *Caution* which I am come to give you.
Or, to speak in the tender Language of Saint
Paul to his beloved *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. iv. 14.
*I write not these things to shame you, but as my be-
loved Sons I warn you.* I hope, therefore, you
will take what I have to say kindly at my Hands ;
as I am sure it proceeds from, and is accompa-
nyed with, the sincerest and most affectionate Con-
cern both for your present and your eternal Wel-
fare. And if some Persons are not greatly mis-
taken in their Sentiments concerning the prevail-
ing Character and Taste of the Age we live in,
as being strangely devoted to Pleasure and immo-
derately

derately fond of every Thing that goes under that Name; there is more than ordinary Reason why we should, at this Time, endeavour to guard our Youth against giving into so false a Taste, as must, in the Consequence of Things, be destructive to Religion and to civil Society too.

That the Character, mentioned in the Text, is really a wicked Character, is evident enough both in itself, and from the Consideration of the other Things to which it is joined. *This know* (saith the Apostle in the Beginning of this Chapter) *that in the latter Days perilous Times shall come; for Men shall be Lovers of their own selves, Covetous, Boasters, Proud, Blasphemers, &c.* to the 4th Verse inclusive.

It is not at all necessary to my present Purpose, that I should entertain you with any critical Remarks concerning the precise Period of Time, which the Apostle here refers to under the Form of *the last Days*; nor that I should detain you with an Explication of the several Characters, which he draws of the Persons of this Time, previous to that described in the Text; to which I shall alone confine myself. I will only observe, that all Ages and Periods of Time have furnished out but too many Instances of Persons, whose Temper and Conduct agree to the Description of those that should live *in the last Days* the Apostle speaks of: though we may suppose that those Days will be, in some distinguished and remarkable Manner beyond others, frui-

ful in the Production of such Wickedness. But, without Doubt, it is in all Ages and at all Times an ill Character, to be a *Lover of Pleasure, more than a Lover of God.*

In further speaking to the Words I shall endeavour,

- I. To describe and explain the Character mentioned in the Text.
 - II. Suggest to your Consideration various Arguments, to dissuade and deter you from the Imitation of it.
 - III. Make some short Reflections by way of Application.—And may the great God, whose Cause I am pleading, give Force and Success to what may be delivered for his Honour and your Good!
- I. To describe and explain the Character mentioned in the Text :—*Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God.*

The *Pleasures* here spoken of, must be understood chiefly of sensible, bodily Pleasures; such as arise from the Gratification of our Senses, in any or all of the Ways in which they are capable of being gratified. But I do not think it is at all necessary to restrain the Apostle's Meaning, only to Pleasures of a vitious and criminal Nature, (though without Doubt those are eminently destructive of, and absolutely inconsistent with,

with, the Love of God) but I rather think he speaks of sensual, bodily Pleasures, in general: of which those Persons were so excessively fond, as that they left no room in their Hearts for the Love of God. — As reasonable Creatures, much more as professing Christians, (for such I take them to have been, for they had a *Form of Godliness*, though they *denied the Power of it*, ver. 5.) they were under the highest, and strongest Obligations to love God; and to approve and express their Love, in all suitable Instances of Worship and Obedience. But the Love of Pleasure had taken such Possession of their Hearts, as rendered them insensible of their Obligations to God, and regardless of their Duty to him. What they should do to please God; how they should comport with the Christian Character; answer the Ends of their Being; fill up Life with Usefulness and Honour; and obtain everlasting Happiness in the future State; these were Things they had left off to attend to, and had no Solitude about. They were so devoted to Pleasure that they relished nothing else; and had thereby contracted an Averfation of Mind to the spiritual Exercises of Religion, and Converse with God. For the Apostle seems to intimate, that the Reason why they did not love God was because they were such Lovers of Pleasure. And indeed the Love of God and the inordinate Love of sensual Pleasures, are Things incompatible, and cannot dwell together in the same Breast. So saith the Apo-

the *John*, 1 *John* ii. 15. *Love not the World, neither the Things that are in the World, (among which, to be sure, the Pleasures of Sense are to be included.) If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.*

And though many of the Pleasures and Gratifications of Sense are, in themselves, very lawful and innocent, and within certain Bounds and Limits, are not forbidden by any Law of Reason or Revelation; yet by an excessive Fondness for them, by an immoderate and unreasonable Indulgence to them, by an over-eager Pursuit of them, and spending too much of our precious Time about them, to the neglect of God and our Duty to him, and the more important Things we have to attain to, we may deserve the Character of being *Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God*; as truly, though not so notoriously and shamefully, as by running out into Gratifications of a more criminal and prohibited kind.

If we love Pleasure so as not to *love God*, let the Pleasure be supposed to be ever so innocent in itself, our Love of it is not innocent; because it breaks in upon our Love to God. And I cannot but apprehend that the chief Danger which young Persons are in, (I mean those who have enjoyed the Blessing of a good Education) is not so much from vicious Pleasures and Indulgences, (you startle at the Thought of them) as from such as have nothing directly sinful in them. Here you think you are safe; but whilst you comfort
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yourselves with such Apprehensions, your Hearts may more insensibly be drawn off from God, and your Regards to Piety weakened and undermined. Here therefore you should be upon your Guard, that you do not let your Affections go out too strongly and intensely towards any sensible Pleasures, how innocent soever in themselves. And there is the more need of this Caution, because the Love of Pleasure, when it once gets footing in the Mind, becomes every Day stronger and stronger, till at length it gains the Ascendancy, and sways and directs all the Motions of the Soul: and when it hath gained the absolute Possession of the Heart, it will no longer leave us at Liberty to enquire, whether the Pleasures we pursue are innocent or not; but will push us on to pursue Pleasures in the Gross, and make us digest any Thing that goes under that Name, be it of what kind it will. Such is the Deceitfulness of Sin.

But that you may not think I bear too hard upon you, my young Friends, I will here make you these two or three Concessions. And

I. I grant you that, to love Pleasure as such, or, to be pleased with that, which is any Way agreeable to us, is not in itself criminal, but innocent, and necessary Affection of human Nature.—But then we ought always to remember that, as God hath endowed us with Reason and Understanding, and made us capable of high and nobler Entertainments, than what arise from

the meer Gratifications of Sense ; it greatly concerns us to take Heed, that we are not so far led away by the Bait of sensible Pleasures, as to forget our highest Interest, to offend God and lose our Souls.

2. I allow too, that it is very reasonable and fitting, sometimes, to unbend the Mind, and to refresh the Body, with some sensible Amusements and Recreations : which I readily grant to be, in their Places, not only lawful, but even expedient and necessary ; both for the Health of the Body, and the Vigour of the Mind, that it may be capable of bearing more serious and severe Application.——But then, we should use the Things of this kind only as Recreations ; to refresh our Spirits, and make us more fit for the Service of God, and the Duties of our Places. We are not to make Diversions our Business, or consume the greatest Part of Life in them, which should doubtless be spent in other Things. And we should also exercise some proper Care, in the Choice of those Recreations themselves ; and, abstain from all such as are unsuitable to our Characters, and of ill Repute among the wise and good Men of the World, and which have a Tendency to draw us into Sin.——I will yet further

3. That some Degree of Love of Pleasure, is more allowable and excusable in young Persons, when their Senses are quick and sprightly, and their Experience small ; than it is in those of
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more advanced Years. For such may reasonably be supposed, to have seen enough of this World, to convince them of the Vanity and Emptiness of it; and they ought to be more taken up with the Thoughts of getting ready for another World, than of enjoying the Pleasures of this. — But to love Pleasures more than God, can be excused by no Consideration of Youth, or of any Thing else whatsoever.

Before I conclude this first general Head, it may be proper to observe, that there are various Degrees, in this Character; which are therefore, according to their several Proportions, respectively criminal in the Sight of God, and hurtful to us, as they more or less obstruct the exercise of our love to God. And, to confess a melancholy Truth, something of this Temper, seems to enter into the present Composition of human Nature, since the unhappy Apostacy of Mankind from God. To the Influence of this, is owing that strong Bent, which we are all of us apt to have towards sensible Pleasures, and that eager Attachment to them; often to the Hurt of our nobler Part, till Reason and Grace teach us Wisdom. And it is the great Design of Religion, and the Work of God's Spirit, to rectify the Disorders of our Minds, and to restore to the Soul it's genuine and primitive Empire over the Body.

II. I now proceed, to offer to your Consideration several Arguments, which, through God's Blessing and Grace, may tend to dissuade and deter you from an Imitation of this Character, which I have been describing.

You may infer, from what hath been already said, under the first Head, that the Love of Pleasure, is a great Obstacle and impediment to the Love of God: and consequently, that in Proportion as it prevails, it will render you so far incapable of Religion, and averse to it. And *that*, of itself, were enough to give you a very disadvantageous Idea of it. But, not to insist upon that any further at present, give me leave to mention some other Things. As,

1. *To Love Pleasures more than God*, is not only an ill but a *mean* and *low* Character, and beneath the Dignity of your reasonable Natures.

If we either had no Souls at all, or Souls of no higher and larger Capacities than the Beasts that perish, it would be excusable enough to immerse ourselves in bodily Pleasures. But seeing *there is a Spirit in Man*, capable of knowing and loving God, and of enjoying his Love, it must be a Shame and Disgrace to him, to be altogether taken up with the Pleasures of Sense, and the Gratifications of animal Nature, and to aim at nothing higher, nothing greater than these. It is a Degradation and Debasement of ourselves,

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and acting a mean and ignoble Part, unworthy the intellectual Powers our Maker hath endow'd us with, who hath taught us more than the *Beasts of the Earth*, and made us wiser than the *Fowls of Heaven*. Job xxxv. 11.

2. To love Pleasures more than God, is inconsistent with the *Design of your being sent into this World*, and with your *relation to another*.

I suppose you cannot imagine that you are placed in this World, as the Leviathan is said to be in the Sea, only to *play therein*, Psal. civ. 26. or to do as the Children of *Israel* are said to have done, after they had set up their molten Calf in the Wilderness, when (as the Apostle Paul describes it,) *the People sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to Play*, 1 Cor. x. 7. It would be an affront to the Wisdom of the great Being, that made us, to suppose that he designed us for no higher Purpose than this; surely we have all of us some *Business* to do in this World. We are to honour God; and to do all the Good we can to our Fellow-Creatures; to answer some useful Purposes in Life, according to our Abilities and Opportunities, and the Station which the Providence of God places us in: and by a Course of Devotedness to God, through *Jesus Christ*, and Beneficence to Men, to prepare ourselves for a more important State, which awaits us in the World to come.

Now if we love Pleasures more than God, we shall pervert the Designs of our Being, and

in vain; and can never answer the Purposes, for which God sent us into the World: and by dropping the Regard we should have to the other World, must be terribly unfit to be removed into it; as I shall have occasion to observe more particularly, in the Sequel of this Discourse. It will be a further Confirmation, and Illustration of what I have said, under the two foregoing Heads, to observe,

3. That the excessive Love of Pleasures, will *soften* and *enfeeble* your Minds, as to render you incapable of doing any Thing great or considerable, either for the Honour of God, or the Good of your Fellow-Creatures.

Nothing eminent can be expected from Persons of this Complexion. A Heart devoted to Pleasures, will have neither the Disposition, nor the Power to accomplish any great Undertaking. It is too contracted within itself, to aim at any Thing considerable, for the Advantage of others: and too feeble and pusillanimous, to execute any such Design, if the Thoughts of it should once arise in the Soul. A Person devoted to Pleasures must necessarily contract an Aversion to any Thing that requires Pains, or Labour and Application; and without this, you are sensible that nothing of any considerable Moment, of one kind or another, can be expected. A small Difficulty will appear as an unsurmountable Obstacle; and the most distant Apprehension of Danger, will frighten and terrify. Like Solomon's

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slothful Man, he will be ready upon every Occasion to say, *there is a Lion in the Way, a Lion in the Streets*; Prov. xxvi. 13. And so, as it follows in the next verse, *as the Door turneth upon his Hinges, so doth the slothful upon his Bed*. He hath no Spirit to encounter any Difficulty, or face the least Opposition: his Resolutions are presently shaken, and he will quit the Enterprize he just engaged in.

And do you chuse to be such contemptible Persons in Life; such insignificant and useles Members of Society? O! shake off this Slothfulness and Love of Ease; rouse up your active Powers, and disdain to be Cumberers of the Ground. Let the Love of God animate you to some Designs for his Honour, and the Benefit of your Fellow-Creatures; and if that posses and reign in your Heart, it will give you Spirit and Vigour, to go through (if possible) your well-meant worthy Designs, and endear you to God and Men.

And as the inordinate Love of sensual Pleasures, will render you incapable of designing and accomplishing any Thing considerable so,

4. It will render you as incapable of bearing the Afflictions and Troubles of Life, with any Degree of Composure and Firmness of Mind.

And whether you think of this or not, you will certainly find it to be a Matter of greater Consequence than you are now aware of. You

are not to expect to pass through Life without meeting with any Occasions of Trouble and Disquietude, any more than your Fathers have done before you. For *Man*, every Man, is born unto Trouble, more or less. It was so in *Job's* Time, and the Case is not altered since. Your Love of Pleasure and Ease, will be very far from procuring you an Exemption from those Troubles; on the contrary, it will rather bring them upon you, in many Cases; and when brought, they will press upon you with double Weight. That Levity of Mind, which carries you out to so eager a pursuit of sensible Pleasures, and tempts you, to forget the Regards you owe to God, and to your own higher Interest, will make you more easily susceptible of painful Impressions; and give a keener and more piercing Sting, to all your Troubles. The Luxurious and the Delicate can bear no Hardships; and every lesser Burden, becomes insupportable to them, for want of Firmness of Mind. Nor can you lay Claim to the Consolations of Religion for your Support, seeing you have so far forgotten God, as to prefer your Pleasures before him.

But if you are Lovers of God, more than of Pleasures, the Consciousness of this, will inspire and support you under all the Troubles that may befall you; and you may look up to God through Jesus Christ, for Help and Comfort, and quietly resign yourselves to his Disposals, with the assured Belief, that your God will never leave you nor forsake you.

It will follow from what hath been already said, and I would urge it, as a further Diffusive from an inordinate and excessive Love of Pleasure,

5. That where this Disposition spreads and prevails, it must have a very *unfriendly Aspect upon Society*, and be evidently prejudicial to the Interests of it.

It is manifest, from the very Nature of Things, as well as from the History of Mankind in all Ages, that Luxury and Softness, and an inordinate Attachment to sensual Pleasures, are the Bane of all Societies; and have been the Ruin of most Kingdoms and States. If you enquire how the several great Empires, that have been heretofore established in the World, came to be dissolved and broken to Pieces, you will find that abounding Luxury and Pleasures, have been the Occasion of their Dissolution. These enslaved Men's Minds and Bodies, laid the Seeds of Discord and Contention among themselves, and so split them into Pieces; or invited foreign Powers to invade them, and so made them an easy Prey to a People of a more rough and martial Disposition; Luxury having broke the Force and Vigour of their Spirits, and prepared their Necks for the Yoke of Slavery.

I pray God that we, in these Nations, may not feel like unhappy Effects, from that Spirit of Luxury which reigns amongst us, and from that unbounded Love of Pleasure which seems to have diffused itself amongst us from the highest to the

lowest! And I earnestly intreat you, my young Friends, as by the Love of God, so by the Love of your Country, and as you would contribute in your Places, to the Support, Defence, and establishment of it, that you do not give into that Love of Pleasure, which in the spreading Consequences of it, must greatly affect the Peace and Order, and it may be, the very Being of our State, as free and Protestant.

O! could we but see a Generation springing up that were Lovers of God, and Virtue, and Goodness, and not meerly Lovers of Pleasure, it would revive the Hearts of all those, that wish well to the Religion and Liberties of their Country; but who are in Pain to think what the Consequences must be if a Spirit, the Reverse of this should prevail amongst us. *Righteousness* (that universal Righteousness, which the Love of God leads to, and tends to inspire Men with, this, in the natural Tendency of it, and by the Fruits and Influences of the Divine Blessing which it draws down) *exalteth a Nation*; but *Sin is the Reproach* (and it threatens the Ruin) *of any People*; Prov. xiv. 34.

I might observe under this Head, that this Love of Pleasure, which I am endeavouring to dissuade you from, makes Persons negligent of their proper Business, teaches them to live above their Circumstances; and so consequently throws them behind hand in the World, and tempts them to take indirect Methods, for the Supply of their Luxury and Extravagance. And this is the Spring

Spring of a great deal of Fraud and false Dealing, Theft and Violence in the World; and occasions Losses and Distresses, to many honest and industrious Persons, who it may be, are ruined and undone, and lose all the Fruits of their Labour and Industry, which should be the Support of themselves and their Families, by the Frauds, or the Extravagance of those they deal with. And this cannot but be very detrimental to Society. But this leads me to add,

6. That an excessive Fondness for Pleasures, will be a great *Enemy to your worldly Prosperity.*

It will be apt to lead you into Expences, above what your Circumstances can well bear; and take off your Minds from a diligent Application, to the Business of your Stations: both of which must have ill Effects upon your Substance. *It is the Hand of the Diligent which (with the Divine Blessing) maketh Rich, Prov. x. 4, 22. But he that loveth Pleasure, shall be a poor Man: he that loveth Wine and Oil shall not be Rich, Prov. xxi. 17. See also, Prov. xxiii. 20, 21. Be not amongst Wine Bibbers, amongst riotous Eaters of Flesh; for the Drunkard and the Glutton shall come to Poverty, and Drowsiness shall clothe a Man with Rags.*

Have you not seen many Persons, who set out in Life with a good Foundation, and fair Advantages of rising in the World, sinking into Poverty and necessitous Circumstances, purely for want of Diligence and Application? They followed
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their Pleasures, neglected their Business, and so brought themselves to Ruin. And this is but the natural consequence of Things. So that, if you have Regard, even to your Worldly Prosperity and Comfort, you should take heed of loving Pleasure too much; or you may pay very dear for it even here; and lay a Foundation for Poverty and Distress, through a great Part of Life.

But besides the Arguments I have already suggested, in order to dissuade you, from an Imitation of the Persons mentioned in the Text, who are *Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God*; there are many others which I might add, which are of a more religious Nature: some of which I shall now mention, and so draw this second Head to a Close. We may observe then,

7. That the Character we are speaking of, is peculiarly opposite to the *Spirit and Genius of the Christian Dispensation*.

What Self-Denial, what Contempt of the World, what Mortification to Sense, does the Christian Religion enjoin and recommend! And can I profess myself a Christian, and yet run counter to the Tenor and Spirit of the Gospel? as I must necessarily do if I love Pleasures more than God. It is not merely disobeying any simple Precept of the Gospel, but it is opposing and destroying the Design of the whole. And how can we call ourselves the Disciples of Jesus Christ, when the Spirit and Complexion of our Minds are

are so diametrically opposite to his?—Was this his Character, to love Pleasures more than God? Infinitely the Reverse. And may we not be ashamed, to call ourselves after his Name, with a Spirit and Character that bears no more Resemblance to his, than Darkness does to Light? *They that are Christs, should mortify the Flesh; with the corrupt Affections and Lusts thereof; Gal. v. 24.*

And what a Foundation hath the Gospel laid, for our love to God! Such as the World was never blessed with before: such as should make us despise every Thing, that would in the least draw off our Hearts and Affections from him. God hath so loved us, as to send his Son to be a Propitiation for our Sins; and in and through him, he is ready to pardon, receive, and bless us; put us among his chosen, and give us eternal Life. And shall not such a Discovery, of the Goodness of God towards us, enkindle in our Hearts the strongest Love to him? Shall I love *Pleasures more than God*, and yet profess to believe all that the Gospel tells me God hath done to engage my love? How criminal must this be?

Moreover, as Christians, we are Disciples of a crucified Saviour: and the Consideration of the *Cross of Christ*, should have the same Effect upon all Christians, as it had upon the Apostle Paul, Gal. vi. 14. *God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Jesus Christ, by whom (or by which) the World is crucified to me, and I to the World.*

World. And the Apostle represents those, *whose God is their Belly, and who Mind earthly Things,* as direct *Enemies to the Cross of Christ*; Phil. iii. 18, 19.

In short, we can neither fulfil the Duties, nor enjoy the Blessings of the Christian Revelation, if we *love Pleasures more than God.* We run counter to the whole Spirit and Design of Christianity, and bring Reproach on our Christian Profession.

8. It is a Character the very *reverse* of that which belonged to all those *great and good Men* you read of in holy Writ.

And methinks, there is something in this, which should strike and impress you. O! that you might feel the Force of it!—It was not by this Way that they traveled up to Fame and God: it was not by this Means that they *obtained their good Report*; and that *being Dead* they are yet spoken of, and will be spoken of, with distinguishing Honour throughout all Generations. No! it was by a Spirit and Conduct the reverse of that mentioned in the Text.

Here I might produce a large and long List of sacred Heroes, whose Names are immortalized in the Records of Scripture; but I shall only refresh your Memories with the Mention of a few.

Enoch was a Person who distinguished himself, from his degenerate Contemporaries, by a holy *walking with God*; and God distinguished him by the peculiar Privilege of taking him to himself without dying.

Noah

Noah was a remarkably righteous Man, who maintained his Integrity and his Regard to God, at a Time when all Flesh besides had *corrupted their Ways*; and him God was pleased miraculously to preserve with his Family, when he brought a Flood of Waters upon the Earth, which destroyed all the rest of Mankind.

You do not find that *Abraham*, and the *Patriarchs* spent their Days in Idleness and Sensuality, but in Acts of laborious Service for their God. They *confessed themselves Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth*; and made it evident by the Conduct of their Lives, as well as the Declaration of their Lips, *that they desired and sought a better Country, even a heavenly*; Heb. xi. 13.

The Example of *Moses* is particularly apposite to our present Purpose, Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. *By Faith Moses, when he was come to Years, refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter; chusing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season: esteeming the Reproach of Christ, greater Riches than the Treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the Recompence of the Reward.*— And I may say, as the same Writer does, ver. 32, of that Chapter, *the Time would fail me to tell of Joshua, Gideon, Barak, Sampson, David, and the Prophets, who, by approving themselves Lovers of God more than of sensual Pleasures, have acquired immortal Renown.* — Here I might mention also the Example of our Lord
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Jesus Christ; and add to it that of his Apostles, and many of the primitive Christians, who triumphed over all the Allurements of Pleasures, and over all the Terrors of Persecution, Torments, and Death, to approve themselves *Lovers of God*.

And shall not these great Examples animate and warm your Hearts, and raise you above a mean Subjection to the Pleasures of Sense? Are they not more worthy your Imitation, and every where regarded with greater Honour, Reverence, and Esteem, than any of the Sons of Vice, and Pleasure; whose Names, are either lost and buried in Oblivion, or recorded with Marks of Infamy, and Contempt? *Wherefore, seeing you are encompassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which easily besets you, and run with Patience the Race which is set before you, looking to the Author and the finisher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God, Heb. xii. 1, 2.* Consider again,

9. What an Affront it is to the blessed God, to be *Lovers of Pleasures more than of him*; and the Thought of this, deter you from an Imitation of this Character.

God is infinitely amiable in himself, and is blessed of all those Perfections, which command the highest Reverence, Love, and Respect: and is infinitely bountiful and good to his *Crea-
tures*;

tures; and he hath been so, in a distinguishing Manner to us, as the Gospel of Christ particularly informs us. *The Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord; and his tender Mercies, are over all his Works.* We are indebted to him, for *Life, and Breath, and all Things*; for every good Thing we have, or hope for. *His Favour is Life, and his loving Kindness better than Life itself.*

Now can you say, or imagine, that the little short-lived Pleasures of Sense, which you are apt to be so fond of, are better, and more worthy Objects of Esteem and Delight, and more capable of affording you Satisfaction and Happiness, than the infinitely blessed God, the eternal Fountain of all Good? And yet this you say in Effect, and by your Choice and Practice, when you *love Pleasures more than God*, ‘*My Son*, ‘*my Daughter, (saith the great and blessed God,* ‘*give me thine Heart.*’ ‘*No, say you, I can* ‘*bestow it better. I will give my Heart to sensual Enjoyments: These will make me much* ‘*more happy, than God and his Love.*’—And can you sustain the Thought of thus affronting the blessed God? I hope you cannot: and therefore that you will forbear doing that, which carries in it this disrespectful, and insolent Language to your Maker.—I cannot forbear adding, this Thought, as a further Dissuasive;

10. That the *loving of Pleasures more than God*, gave Birth to the *first Transgression*, and

consequently, to all the Miseries and Calamities which Mankind have groaned under ever since.

—*The Woman saw that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleasant to the Eyes; as well as a Tree to be desired, to make one wise; and she took of the Fruit thereof, and did eat, (though God had expressly commanded the contrary,) and she gave also to her Husband with her, and he did eat, Gen. iii. 6.*

This was the Beginning of Sin and Misery in our World. Had not our first Parents been seduced by the Bait of sensible Pleasures, to transgress the Commandment of their God, and so to forfeit his Favour and Love, or had they approved themselves Lovers of God, more than of any sensual Pleasures; how happy had it been for them, and for their Posterity! But methinks, the sad Effects which sprang, from that first Transgression, and the Consideration of what gave Rise and Birth to it, should be improved as a warning to us, their Descendants, not to indulge to that Disposition, which proved so fatal to the first Parents of Mankind, and which hath let in such a Flood of Sorrows and Calamities, upon all their Posterity.—I must not further enlarge upon these Thoughts; and shall only add in the

Last Place, That to love Pleasures more than God, will make *Death exceeding terrible to you,* and the Future State a *State of Misery.*

O ! Death, (saith the Son of Sirach,) how bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at rest in his Possessions ; unto the Man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath Prosperity in all Things ! Eccles. xli. 1. And so say I ; O ! Death, how bitter is the Remembrance of thee, to a Man, that loveth Pleasures more than God ! The most distant Thought of it, is startling and amazing ; but it's nearer Approaches confounding, and overwhelming.

When you shall come to lye on a sick and dying Bed, (and you know not how soon this may be your Case, young as you are,) it will administer Matter of dreadful Reflection to think ;
 ——— I have spent my Life, in a Neglect of God,
 ‘ and in the Pursuit of sensual Pleasures ! Was
 ‘ this the End I was made for ? This the Purpose for which God sent me into the World ?
 ‘ O ! what Account shall I be able to give of
 ‘ myself, at the Bar of God ! How shall I appear before that God whom I have so grossly
 ‘ affronted, as to prefer, the momentary Gratifications of Sense, before his Favour, and his
 ‘ Eternal Life, in *Jesus Christ* ? ——— And would you desire to have Death made thus terrible to you ?

And what the future State will be, to Persons of this Complexion, our Lord *Jesus Christ* hath told us, in a very lively and affecting manner, in the Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus* ; Luke xvi. 19, &c. That rich Man ap-
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pears to be just such a Person, as the Text speaks of, a *Lover of Pleasures more than a Lover of God*; and to have his Heart supremely-set upon the Gratifications and Entertainments of Sense. *He was clothed in fine Linen, and fared sumptuously every Day.* Well; at length he dies, and is buried; and the very next Thing, you hear of him is, that *he lifts up his Eyes in Hell, being in Torment*; and becomes an humble Suitor to *Abraham*, that he would send *Lazarus*, to refresh the Tip of his Tongue, with a Drop of Water, to afford a Moment's Ease, from the scorching Flame. But he sues in vain: and is given to understand that in those miserable Regions he must live eternally, without the least Hope, of being relieved, or refreshed from thence: there being a *great Gulf* fixed between him and them, which, by a divine Decree, was impassable.—O! piteous, unhappy End of a Life of Sensuality and Pleasure!

But on the other Hand, if you approve yourselves Lovers of God, more than of Pleasures, and act agreeably to that Character, in the Course of Life; you may bid wellcome, to the Approaches of Death, and meet it with Composure and holy Joy. It will be no Enemy to you, it will only bring you to the nearer, and more immediate Embraces, of the great Object of your supreme Love; where you will eternally enjoy the Smiles of his Countenance, and the blessed Fruit of his Love for ever.

Having been thus large, in the Enumeration of the several Arguments and Considerations, which should deter you, from being *Lovers of Pleasures more than of God*; I must be very brief in the Application of this Discourse.— The Sum is this; you can never answer the Ends of your Beings, be accepted of God, be useful Members of Society, can never live well, nor dye well, if this be your Character, *Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God*.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

Give me leave then to ask you, my Friends; Have you considered what I have here offered you? and may I hope that, through God's Grace and Blessing, I shall prevail with you this Day to give your Hearts, and your supreme Affections to God? But do not think, that you are for ever to renounce and forego all Pleasure, when you are taught to love God more than that. You have heard it proved to you, on former Occasions, that *the Ways of Wisdom are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace*. You are allowed all the innocent Pleasures and Gratifications of Sense, in such Degree as they are innocent, and that is as far as any wise Person would wish to enjoy them. Nay, the Love of God, is itself the most pleasing Affection of human Nature: and no Entertainments or Delights of Sense can give half that Pleasure to the Soul, as arises from the very Act, and Exercise of such a Love.

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This, in Perfection, constitutes Heaven ; and is itself a great Part of the Blessedness of it. And if you love God, and are beloved of him, you will have a truer Relish, of the innocent Pleasures of Life ; and will taste a Sweetness in them, as coming from the Covenant Love of God, which will enhance the Relish of them. But you are not to love Pleasures more than God, as I hope you are convinced, you ought not, by all the Considerations above mentioned.

And to prevent your doing so, let me suggest, that you should look up to God, to bring you acquainted with higher and better Pleasures than those of Sense ; and to form you by his Grace, to a Disposition of Mind, capable of relishing them. Think often with yourselves, what a glorious Object of Love, the blessed God is ! How excellent, and amiable !——Think of the Powers of your own Mind,——Think of Christ and his Gospel.——Consider the Shortness, and Uncertainty of human Life ;——The Certainty, and Awfulness of Death ;——And of that solemn Day of Judgment, when *God will render to every one, according to his Works.*——And let me add that you should carefully avoid Idleness, and not give way to a slothful Indolence of Temper, which will stupify the Powers of you Mind, and render you useless or burdensome Members of Society.——But I must not enlarge.

I will only beg leave to suggest one Word to Parents, and other Instructors of Children,
and

and young People: That they should endeavour to breed them up in a noble disdain of sensual Pleasures; and teach them, rather to despise, than set any great Value upon them. So will their Charge be like to become good Disciples of *Jesus Christ*, good and useful Members of Society, and an Honour and Comfort to them who had the Education of them. But you must not make Religion a terrible, and irksome Thing to your Children; nor carry it, with so strict a Discipline, as to forbid them all Manner of innocent Pleasures. This will give Disgust, and tempt them to run out into dangerous Liberties, when they are out of your Sight, and from under your Authority. I believe it to be no easy Matter to keep the due Medium, between the two Extremes, of too much Indulgence on the one Hand, and too strict Restraint on the other. But may the God of all Wisdom be your Director! And I pray God to bless all your Endeavours, to bring up Children for God, and to train them up, *in the Nurture, and Admonition of the Lord.*

And I hope you will follow this, and every other Service of mine, for the good of Souls, with your earnest Prayers to God for Success. *And now I commend you all to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build us up, and give us an Inheritance among them that are sanctified.*

O! that

O! that we may all of us meet together at last in Heaven, and not one of us, or ours, be found missing in the great Assembly of the Blessed above! Grant this, O most merciful God, for the sake of *Jesus Christ* thy Son, to whom be *Glory, for ever. Amen!*



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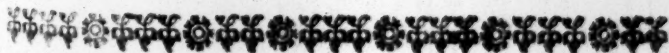


*The Way to attain the Favour of God and
Man.*

S E R M O N VI.

P R E A C H E D

OCTOBER 8, 1735.



THE BRITISH MUSEUM

THE HISTORY OF THE FORMER OF GERMANY



IV. VI. 8. R. 1735

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LUKE ii. 52.

*And Jesus increased in Wisdom and Stature,
and in Favour with God and Man.*

METHINKS there is something in these Words, that is peculiarly suited to your Case and Circumstances, O my young Friends, to whom I am yet again to address myself this Day. How lovely, how charming is the Character, here given of the blessed Child Jesus, that *he increased in Wisdom as he grew in Stature, and was in Favour both with God and Man!* How amiable a Character, I say, is this! Does it not immediately, and upon the first Mention of it, strike the Mind with Desire, Esteem, and Delight?

O! how happy are the Parents and Friends of those Children, who are formed to any Degree of Resemblance to this Temper and Character of our blessed Lord! And what an unspeakable Pleasure and Joy would it administer, to the Hearts of those amongst us who are trembling for the Ark of God, and fearful of the Consequences

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quences of that sad Declension of Religion so universally complained of in our Days, if they could but see a good Number of such promising Youths springing up in the World ! I am very ambitious to contribute my best Endeavours, under God, to promote so desirèable an Effect : and shall esteem myself very happy, if I may be an Instrument in the Hand of Divine Grace, to form at least some of your Minds, to such a Disposition as may recommend you, to the Love both of God and Man. And may the Power of the Holy Ghost attend the Instructions of this Day, and make them thus happily effectual, to the Good of your Souls !

We read very little in the New Testament of what our Saviour either said, or did, before he entered upon the Stage of publick Life. The most considerable Passage that is recorded concerning him, before the Period he began his Publick Ministry, is that which Saint Luke relates in this second Chapter of his Gospel ; where we are informed, that when he was twelve Years old, his Parents carryed him up to *Jerusalem*, to the Feast of the Passover ; and that Jesus taking Occasion to stay behind them at *Jerusalem*, was after three Days Search after him, found to the Surprise of all, sitting in the midst of the Jewish Doctors, and Rabbies, both hearing them and asking them Questions. You may read the Story, with all its Circumstances, from verse 41. to verse 51. After this, we are told he

went

went down from *Jerusalem* to *Nazareth*, with his Parents, and was subject to them ; verse 51. And this is all we hear of him till he entered upon his Publick Work, which was about the *thirtieth* Year of his Age ; as we learn from Luke iii. 23. (a) No Doubt but the intermediate Years were filled up with the Duties of Piety and Devotion ; and with as much Usefulness as was consistent with the private Station which Providence had then appointed him to act in. But how he particularly employed himself we cannot certainly say ; the Scriptures being altogether silent upon this Head. Only it is added in general, concerning Christ in the Text, that *he increased in Wisdom and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man.*

It is evident that this Account of our Blessed Lord, must be understood to relate to his *human Nature* ; for of the *divine Nature*, with which also he was endowed, such Things could not be spoken with any Propriety.

The general Meaning of the Words is this ;—that as the Child Jesus advanced in Years, his Body grew also in Stature, and his Mind was proportionably replenished with Wisdom, and Knowledge. And such was the Complexion of

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his

(a) There is indeed an antient Book that bears the Title of *the Gospel of our Saviour's Infancy*, which relates a great many Stories, of wonderful Things said and done by him, during the Time of his Childhood and Youth : but it is generally thought to be fabulous.

his Mind, and such his Behaviour and Conversation, so innocent, and so excellent, so divine, and heavenly, that he became continually, more and more the Object of the Divine Favour; and gained the growing Esteem and Love of all, that had the Happiness to be acquainted with him.

Now here, my young Friends, is an Example worthy your Imitation; and what I would this Day earnestly recommend to you to copy after. Endeavour, in your Measure, to be herein Imitators and Followers of *Christ*; that you may obtain and enjoy the Love of God and Man.

I flatter myself that you stand readily disposed to receive any Instructions, which, through the Divine Blessing, may conduce to form you to this honourable and comfortable Resemblance to your blessed Lord. And it shall be my chief Business at this Time to point out to you, in the plainest and best Manner I can, what I apprehend to be the most likely and effectual Method of obtaining this Resemblance, and of securing to yourselves, in Consequence of it, the Favour both of God and Man.

But, before I enter upon this, it may be proper to premise a few Observations, for the better stating the Subject under Consideration; and to shew you briefly the comparative Certainty, and Importance, of the Favour of God and of Man; that you may better know what you have to expect, and how much you may depend upon either the one or the other of these, or on both

conjunctly. To this Purpose I would lay down the following Remarks.

I. The Favour of God is our highest Felicity ; and what we ought therefore to be most concerned about, and most solicitous to secure.

It is with God, my Friends, we have chiefly to do. *All our Springs are in him. His Favour is Life, and his Loving-Kindness is better than Life.* The Love and Favour of God is comprehensive of every Thing, we either want or wish for, to make us happy.

II. It is an additional Mercy, and should be so esteemed, if, beside the Favour of God, we can obtain the Favour and Love of Men too.

Doubtless it is a Thing very agreeable in itself to be loved and esteemed by those that are about us, and to be treated with Marks of Kindness and affectionate Good-will. It is in itself an Honour and a Blessing. And, on the other Hand, it is a real Infelicity in Life, and a Circumstance grating to human Nature, to be on any Account the Object of the Scorn and Hatred of Men.

III. Ordinarily speaking, and in the common Course of Things, these are not inconsistent with

each other ; but are both acquired and lost by one and the same Means.

That Temper of Mind, and Conduct in Life, which renders us, in Christ, the Objects of the Divine Favour ; will, for the most Part, secure to us the Favour of Men too : and by the very Steps that we incur the Displeasure of God, by the very same Steps do we ordinarily forfeit the Esteem and Love of Men.

This Observation does, I believe, hold good particularly in the Case of Children and young Persons ; who, if they be so happy as to love God, and to be beloved of him ; do very rarely fail of being beloved also by all about them.

I appeal to common Experience for the Truth of this.

But, IV. If at any Times it so happens that we cannot, at once, enjoy or possess the Love of God and Man ; Religion, Reason, and common Sense itself, will teach us to prefer the Divine Favour before that of Men : since the former is infinitely more important to us, and infinitely more necessary to our Happiness, than the latter can possibly be.

I must not, I will not conceal it from you, my young Friends, that these two Things, the Favour of God and Men, may interfere with each other ; and in Fact have often done so. When Persons are grown up in the World, and especially

especially if they are called out by Providence to act in any publick Character and Station in Life; it is a very possible Thing for them to be obliged to relinquish the Favour and Countenance of Men, that they may not forego the Divine Favour. They may incur the Hatred and Ill-will of the World, by those very Acts of Piety and Zeal for God, and his Truth and Worship, which render them peculiarly dear to him. Thus our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself, when once he entered upon his publick Ministry, and began to oppose the Errors and Corruptions of the Jewish Teachers, was, you know, hated and persecuted by the *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees* and the Rulers of the Jews; and, through their Influence, despised also by the Bulk of the meaner People too; and at length they put him to Death as a notorious Malefactor. And thus also many of the best Servants of God, and the Redeemer, have been most injuriously treated; in one and another Place and Age, by a wicked and ill-natured World.

And possibly some of you, my dear young Friends, may meet hereafter with the like Treatment, if you resolve to be faithful to God, and a good Conscience, and to act with Zeal for the Honour of God and the Purity of his Institutions in the World. But if ever this should be the Case, you must comfort yourselves with a Sense of the Divine Favour, and resolve rather to obey and please God than Men. Lay this
down

down as a sacred Maxim of Truth, and Rule of Conduct, never upon any Occasion to be departed from, that the Favour of God is to be secured at all Adventures, whatever becomes of the Favour of Men.

But then suffer me to remind you, for your Encouragement, of what hath been observed just before, that there is very little Danger, in most Cases, of Children and young Persons losing the Favour of Men, by endeavouring to secure that of God. But on the contrary, if you do those Things which please God, you may, with the highest Probability, expect the Esteem and Goodwill of Men. And in Proportion as you advance in the Divine Favour, you will, in all likelihood, grow also in the Esteem and Love of all about you. And surely this is a most desirable Thing! and what no Mind that hath but any, the least, spark of Virtue and Honour in it, can be altogether Indifferent to!

Having premised these few Remarks, for the better stating the Matter under Consideration; I shall now apply myself to point out to you, as I proposed, the most likely and effectual Method of obtaining this Honour and Happiness, *to be in Favour both with God and Men.* And to this Purpose let me desire your Attention to the following Counsels and Directions.

I. You must endeavour to get your Minds deeply tinctured with *true Piety*, and the Fear of God.

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I mention this in the first Place, because this is, of all others, the most necessary Thing, and a proper Foundation for all the rest.——Begin betimes to enquire after God, and say, *where is God my Maker*; that I may know, and love, and serve, and enjoy him? It will be a Thing pleasing to God and Man, to see you *remember your Creator and your Redeemer in the Days of your Youth*, Eccles. xii. 1. And though true Piety be at all Times, and in all Persons, an amiable Thing; yet there is something in early Piety that is peculiarly beautiful and engaging. To see a young Creature discovering a great Awe of God upon his Mind, devoutly worshipping God in the Name of *Jesus Christ* Day by Day, and fearing in any Instance to displease his Maker, and aspiring after Fellowship and Communion with him through the great Mediator; delighting to know God, and studying the Works and Word of God, that he might grow in an Acquaintance with God and a Likeness to him, and in a meetness for the eternal Enjoyment of him in the Heavenly World: this I say, is a Sight most agreeable to the Blessed God, and charming and lovely in the Eyes of all sober Men. *I remember the Kindness of thy Youth*, saith God to the Israelites, Jer. ii. 2. *He loves them, that love him, and those especially that seek him early, shall find him*, Prov. viii. 17.

But,

But, as the Apostle saith in Relation to *Faith*, so may I say with regard to *Piety*, without *Piety it is impossible to please God*. You can never hope to obtain his Favour, or enjoy the Fruits of his Love and Blessing without this. And if Piety towards God be neglected, there is reason to fear that you will soon run into those Sins and Follies in Life which will lose you also the Love and Esteem of Men.

Allow me to take this Occasion particularly to warn you against one Instance of Impiety, which is too common in the World; I mean the Vice of *prophane Swearing* and *taking God's Name in vain*. It is very grating in a Christian Ear to hear that awful Name, which Angels revere and Devils tremble at, pronounced by any one whatever in a light and profane Manner. But there is, I think, something particularly shocking to hear that tremendous Name thus profanely used by the Mouth of Children, as we too often do to our Sorrow and Amazement in our Streets. And if not only the awful Name of God be thus taken in vain; but his Vengeance, and Damnation from him be lightly or maliciously imprecated by these young Creatures upon their own Souls, or upon the Souls and Bodies of others; who can sustain the Sound without shuddering and Horror? and by reason of such swearing as this *our Land mourneth*. I beseech you, my young Friends, guard against the least approaches to this Vice: and never use the sacred Name of God

but

but with a holy awe and Reverence.—But I proceed to a second Head of Advice, which I would beg leave to recommend to you, in order to obtain the joint Favour of God and Man. And that is,

II. Pay all due *Honour and Obedience to your Parents.* Next to Piety towards God, Piety towards your Parents is most ornamental and necessary for you.

That the preformance of this Duty is particularly pleasing to God, may be gathered from what Saint *Paul* observes concerning the Commandment enjoining this, (*viz.*) that *it is the first Commandment with Promise.* It hath, you know, a special and particular Promise annexed to it, namely, of *long Life* and Comfort, Eph. vi. 2. And the same Apostle in another Place, recommending this Duty to Children, says expressly, that *this is well-pleasing to the Lord*, Col. iii. 20.

The Violation of this Precept exposes to the peculiar Resentment of God. The Law of *Moses* was very strict in this Case; *He that smiteth his Father, or Mother, shall surely be put to Death*, Exod. xxi. 15. And *he that curseth his Father, or Mother, shall surely be put to Death*, verse 17. Those are also severe and awful Denunciations which you meet with in the Book of Proverbs, Chap. xx. 20. xxx. 17. And really there is some-

something so unnatural and perverse in a Child's carrying it contemptuously, and stubbornly towards a prudent and a tender Parent, that it is no Wonder if it should hereby forfeit both the Favour of God and Man.

But on the other Hand, it is very agreeable to see Children behaving in a respectful Manner towards their Parents, and chearfully paying them that Honour, Love, and Obedience, which God and Nature require at their Hands. And herein, my young Friends, you have Christ himself for your Example; who taught Submission and Regard to Parents by his own Practice of it. see the Verse before the Text.

III. Let me further recommend to you, as very necessary for the Purpose before us, *Humility and Modesty of Mind and Behaviour.*

That Precept of the Apostle Paul, Rom. xii. 16. is particularly needful for young Persons to attend to; *be not wise in your own Conceits.* Pride and Self-conceit are very disagreeable where ever they are found; for, as the Son of Sirach beautifully expresses it, *Pride was not made for Man.* Eccles. x. 18. But it is, in a very particular Manner, unsuitable to the Circumstances and Character of young Persons; whose Age and Inexperience should forbid them to entertain such high Thoughts of themselves. And like a dew Fly in the Box of Ointment, Pride and Self-
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ciency spoil, in a great Measure, any other good Qualification they are mingled with, and will tarnish the Lustre of every other Endowment that you may be possessed of.

Neither God nor Man look favourably upon such as are, in a prevailing Degree, tainted with this vicious Disposition of Mind; but Humility and Modesty are very agreeable to both. *The Lord hath respect unto the Lowly, but the Proud he knoweth afar off,* Psal. cxxxviii. 6. *He resisteth the Proud but he giveth Grace to the Humble,* 1 Pet. v. 5. *Every one that is proud in Heart is an Abomination to the Lord,* Prov. xvi. 5. And a proud Look is among the Things which he hateth, Prov. vi. 16, 17. *Before Honour is Humility, and before Destruction the Heart of Man is brought,* Prov. xviii. 12. *When Pride cometh then cometh Shame, but with the Lowly is Wisdom,* Prov. xi. 2. *By Humility and the Fear of the Lord are Riches, Honour, and Life,* Prov. xxii. 4.

And every one that knows any Thing of the Christian Religion, cannot but know that Humility is a Grace very much insisted upon and recommended on all Occasions there. And our Lord Jesus Christ himself was a shining Example of it, he was eminently *meek and lowly in heart*, Mat. xi. 29. O! learn Humility from your Saviour. Believe it, nothing can be more instrumental to you; it will set off every other Endowment, and give it a Lustre and a Grace that is very engaging.

Under this Article, of Humility, I would take Occasion to recommend to you, what is the usual Fruit, and a very becoming Expression of it, an habitual *Courteousness* and *Affability* of Temper and Conversation. It is a Part of Religion, as well as good Breeding, *to be courteous*, 1 Pet. iii. 8. to speak and behave in a courteous and obliging Manner to all with whom you converse. And a Conduct the Reverse of this will be apt to give Disgust, and generally proceeds from Pride and Ignorance, and a too great Contempt of our Fellow-Creatures.—But to proceed,

IV. As you grow in Stature and Years, endeavour to make *proportionable Improvement in Wisdom and Knowledge*.

Thus your blessed Saviour did, as is particularly taken Notice of in the Text. *He increased in Wisdom as he grew in Stature and Age*, and so he was *in Favour with God and Man*. You see at once his Love of Wisdom, and Extraordinary Proficiency in it, by what St. *Luke* mentions of him in the Context; that when he was but twelve Years old he was found sitting among the Jewish Doctors, *both hearing them, and asking them Questions*. And certainly it is vastly engaging to see Children, and young Persons, addicting themselves to the Study of useful Knowledge, and making continual Advances in it from Time to Time.

Time, according to their Opportunities and Capacities, and the Stations of Life they are either placed in, or designed for. This will recommend you to the special Love and Esteem of all that know you; and it cannot but be pleasing also in the Eyes of God, who loves to see his Creatures improving their Time and Capacities to the most valuable Purposes, and labouring to adorn their Minds with solid Wisdom and Understanding. But, on the other Hand, it is neither agreeable to God or Man, to see young Creatures thoughtlessly and foolishly squandering away their precious Time in trifling Amusements, having no Love or Value for the proper Ornaments of a reasonable Mind, and so *despising their own Souls.*

And here I might very properly recommend to you, *Diligence and Industry*: for these are the necessary Means of acquiring Wisdom and Knowledge. Nothing good can come of Idleness and Sloth. Youth is the proper Season for Labour and Application. Indulge not to an inordinate Love of Ease, nor suffer yourselves, by any Means, to contract a Habit of Indolence; for this will be apt to grow upon you, and make you useless and contemptible through Life. Be not afraid of Application to the Studies, or the Business, you are engaged in. Idleness will expose you to a Thousand Temptations. The Picture of the Sluggard, as drawn by *Solomon* in the Book of *Proverbs*, is enough to frighten any one out

of Love of such a Character. See, *Prov.* xviii. 9. xix. 15, 24. xxiv. 30. xxi. 25. which you may read at your Leisure; together with Chap. vi. ver. 6, and following. Where the wise Man sends him to the Ant to learn better Oeconomy. And, on the other Hand, the Picture of the diligent Person, as drawn in the same Book, is as agreeable; see, Chap. x. 4. xxii. 29. But

V. The next Particular I would recommend to you is, *exact Truth and Sincerity in all your Words.*

I cannot help inculcating this with particular Earnestness and Concern, because I am sensible how apt Children and young Persons are to be defective on this Head; and how prone especially they are to deny any Thing they have done, which they apprehend, if discovered, would bring upon them the Displeasure of their Superiors. But, my dear young Friends, as you tender the Favour and Love of God and Man, I beseech you, abhor the *Way of Lying*; and carefully guard against every Thing that so much as borders upon an Untruth. *Lying Lips are an Abomination to the Lord: But they that deal truly are his Delight,* *Prov.* xii. 22. And, ver. the 19. of that Chapter, the wise Man observes, that the *Lip of Truth shall be established for ever: but a lying Tongue is but for a Moment.* He that hopes to abide in God's Tabernacle, and to dwell in

his holy Hill, *must speak the Truth in his Heart,*
 Psal. xv. 1, 2.

You know who is in Scripture, by way of Eminence, called *the Lyar* and the *Father* of such, *John* viii. 44. And I hope none of you are willing to bear his Image, or be his Children: Let Truth be always a sacred Thing with you; dare to be true on all Occasions. And whatever you may have done amiss, honestly confess it; and never attempt to conceal it by a Lye, which will only aggravate the Matter: according to those Lines of Mr. *Herbert*, which most of you, I believe, have read or heard of;

Dare to speak Truth; Nothing deserves a Lye;
 The Fault that needs it most, grows two thereby.

It argues a Meanness of Spirit to lye and dissemble; and therefore the very Imputation of such a Thing, is one of the greatest Affronts that can be offered to the Honour of a Man. There is hardly a more odious Character in Life, than that of a common Lyar. Such a Person is generally despised by all the World; and no one will believe or regard what he saith, no, not when he speaks Truth. And, what is still worse, he is most certainly the Object of God's Displeasure; from whom none of his Lyes or Falshood are, or can be, possibly concealed.

Wherefore I earnestly intreat you, my young Friends, to make Conscience of speaking the

Truth on all Occasions ; and possess your Minds with a lively Sense of the Sinfulness and Baseness of Lying. And remember, that both God and Man hate a Lyar and an habitual Dissembler. Truth is the Cement of Society, and the Ground of that mutual Confidence which is necessary to the Order and Comfort of it. And the God whom you worship is the *God of Truth*.

VI. *Gravity* and *Sedateness* are Things which will be very ornamental to you.

But when I speak of *Gravity*, I would not be understood to mean any Thing like *Moroseness* or *Austerity* of Countenance or Behaviour ; any Thing that is inconsistent with sober Cheerfulness of Spirit, or with the use of seasonable and proper Recreations. On the contrary, I am persuaded that Innocent Cheerfulness well becomes all good People, and young Persons especially ; and that Religion rather encourages than forbids it in them. Though it must be owned, that Mirth ought not to be our Business, or chief Pursuit and Pleasure.—But by *Gravity*, in the present Case I mean *Solidity*, and an Air of Thoughtfulness something that discovers a Mind raised above undue Fondness for childish Sports, and trifling Amusements, and disposed to relish the more Entertainments of Reflexion and wise Discourse. Our blessed Lord at twelve Years of Age, was in Company for the oldest Doctors of the Jews ;

has been already observed. And I appeal to common Experience, whether the Appearance of such a Disposition does not give, even to Children, a certain Air of Dignity and Importance in the Eyes of the World, and command universal Esteem. This, my young Friends, will make you look like reasonable Creatures betimes, and place you above the Level of others that are your Equals in Age; and will give Ground to hope that you will grow up to some Eminency in Religion and Usefulness in after Life. And can this be other than pleasing in the Eyes of God and Man?

But let me add, this Gravity must be natural and genuine, not a Thing affected and put on; for that will only make you ridiculous. Nothing artificial in Religion is valuable. Let your Aspect and Deportment be the true Copy of your Heart, and a sincere Representation of the inward Disposition and Temper of your Mind. Once more,

VII. I would mention and recommend to you, on this Occasion, the Virtues of *Temperance* and *Chastity*, as Things, without which, you can never hope to obtain the *Favour of God and Man*.

The Consequences of Intemperance and Impurity are infinitely mischievous; and I would therefore with particular Earnestness warn you against all Approaches to these Vices. O! learn
—betimes

betimes to keep your Bodies in a proper State of Subjection to your Souls: and let the Appetites and Inclinations of Sense be made to obey the Restraints of Reason and Religion. Learn to deny the Body what it blindly craves, which may be prejudicial to the Peace and Purity of the Mind. Affect not Niceties in your eating and drinking, but be content with plain and wholesome Food. And I would, in a particular Manner, intreat all my young Friends to beware how they contract an undue and irregular Fondness for strong Liquors of any kind; which intoxicate and stupify the Brain, and degrade a reasonable Creature into the State of a Brute. You may be sure this is not the Way to attain the Favour of God and Man; but the certain Means of losing both, and consequently of losing your own Happiness in both Worlds. There is a great deal of Reason to urge this Caution with special Earnestness, in the present Age, when the Custom of Drinking is so common, even among Persons of both Sexes.

And with like Earnestness would I intreat you, to cultivate and preserve an inviolable Regard to the Rules of *Purity and Chastity*. *Keep your Hearts with all Diligence*. And, in God's Name, command down every Motion and Inclination that is inconsistent with Purity of Spirit. Take heed of the Beginnings of this Sin, and of all those Things that are Incentives and Occasions of it. It hath slain its Thousands, and
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ten Thousands; and hath been the Spring of Infinite Mischief and Calamity to Mankind. *It's Steps take hold of Hell.* And here I would take the Liberty to caution you against conversing with such Books, or Representations in Pictures, and other like Things, as have a Tendency to pollute the Imagination, and raise impure Images in your tender Minds. And I am bold to say, that who ever puts such Books or Pictures into the Hands of Children or young Persons, might also just as well put into their Hands a Cup of Poison. A little Spark cast by this Means into a Bosom unhappily disposed to receive it, hath frequently been blown up into such a Flame as has burnt down to the lowest Hell. *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you, abstain from fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul,* 1 Pet. ii. 11. Yea, and against the Body too; see *Prov. v. 8.* and following. But,

VIII. Let me further suggest to you, that *Prudence* and *Discretion* are very recommending Qualities in young Persons, and which you should therefore, by all Means, endeavour to acquire and exercise.

More of the Comfort and usefulness of Life depends upon this single Quality of Prudence than you can well imagine: and without it Beauty, Riches, Learning, and other Accomplishments of Nature

Nature and Art, will be in a great Measure insipid and uselefs, *Prov. xi. 22.*

Study therefore, my young Friends, this excellent Quality. *Guide all your Affairs with Discretion, and Discretion will preserve you, Prov. ii. 11.* Having mentioned the Book of *Proverbs*, I would particularly recommend it to your careful Perusal; as a Book divinely calculated to give *Subtilty to the Simple, and to the young Man Knowledge and Discretion, Prov. i. 4.*—Our blessed Saviour was a great Example of Prudence, as the Prophet foretold he would be, *Isai. liii. 13. Behold my Servant shall deal prudently.* I will only add

IX. and lastly, If you desire to attain the Favour of God and Man, cultivate a constant *Benevolence and Mercifulness of Temper, and universal Love and Charity.*

This was the very Complexion of your Saviour's Mind. He was all Love and Goodness, Meekness and Compassion. And his Religion bears upon it the Marks and Signatures of the Disposition of its great Founder. O! copy after this amiable Example; and endeavour to cultivate, in your Measure, a like Goodness of Disposition! Avoid every Thing that favours of Cruelty, even towards the poor Beasts below you, and much more towards the Creatures of your own Rank and Species. Banish from your Heart

as much as may be, all the Seeds of Malice, Hatred, and Revenge. Be slow to Anger ; and ready to forgive those that have offended you ; nor think of returning Evil for Evil. It is a much more glorious Thing to subdue your Passions, than to gratify them. On all Occasions shew yourselves Friends to Peace ; and instead of making Quarrels and Broils, endeavour all you can to make them up. Study to be quiet, and possess your Souls with Peace and Patience.

Let not your Love and Charity be confined to any one Sect or Party of Christians, but embrace, with cordial Affection, all those that in every Denomination, appear to *love our Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity* ; though in some lesser Points, of Faith and Practice, they differ from you.

Nay, you should rise still higher, and possess your Minds with a Love of Benevolence and Good-will towards the whole human Species, and count every one, whatever, your Neighbour, whom you have an Opportunity of doing good to ; see *Luke x. 29*, and following. Wish well to all Mankind ; and delight in the Happiness of others as your own ; sympathize with the Unhappy and Distressed where ever you meet with them, and with Pleasure contribute what you can to their Relief. Thus doing, you will be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, and will be beloved by all about you. For *who is he that will harm you, if you be thus Followers of that which is good ?* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

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These are now, my young Friends, some of the principal Things which I could think of to recommend, this Day, to your Consideration; that you might be, in some Measure, like to your Lord Jesus, and be *in Favour with God and Man*. There are other Things which might be added, but these may suffice for the present Discourse.

It is now Time that I draw this Discourse to a Conclusion. And I shall crave your Patience only a little longer, while, by way of Application, I offer a few Things briefly, in Address, 1. To Parents and Governours of Children, and young Persons; 2. To those young Persons themselves.

1. To the first I shall only say,——You see, my Friends, the great Business incumbent upon you, in relation to the Children committed by Nature, or by Providence to your Charge; and what is the main Point to which all your Labour and Instructions should tend, *viz.* that their Minds and Manners may be so formed, as that they may become, in Christ Jesus, the Objects of the divine Favour, and may gain also the Esteem and Love of Men. And though it is true indeed, that the wisest and best Methods of Education do not always prove successful, yet it will be a Satisfaction to you to have done your Duty. To be sure, under God, there is much depends upon a careful and prudent Education; and this is the Way which God ordinarily blesses. Let me beseech you, therefore, to do what in you lies to inspire your Children with a Love of
Piety,

Piety, Humility, and the other good Dispositions, mentioned above.

But my chief Business this Day being with young Persons, therefore,

2. To you, my young Friends, I now turn myself. And

1. It may be, some of you may be so happy as to be possessed of many excellent and amiable Accomplishments and Dispositions, which recommend you to the Esteem and Love of your Fellow-Creatures; but yet, at the same Time, are so unhappy as not to be in a State of Acceptance with God, through *Jesus Christ*, for want of true Piety, and a sincere Regard to God.

This is not an uncommon Case. But, O! what Pity is it, that you should not add Piety to all your other Accomplishments? This would make your Character compleat.—The Favour and Love of Men is desirable, but is not that of God infinitely more so? Is it not a greater Honour to be approved of God, than to have the Approbation of a Fellow-Worm? And is not the Divine Love a Spring of infinitely more important Bliss, than that of Men can be attended with? O! be persuaded to go one Step further, and add true Piety and Devotedness to God, to all your other good Qualifications; and then you are happy. Remember the Case of the young Man in the Gospel, that hopeful Youth, who, for want of this single Qualification, fell

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short of Heaven ; notwithstanding all those other amiable Dispositions which appeared in him.

2. There may be others, on the other Hand, who, though they are really interested in the Divine Favour, through *Jesus Christ*, as being sincerely pious and good, yet, through some Unhappiness of natural Temper, or strange Disregard to the common Rules of Civility and Decorum, render themselves disagreeable to their Fellow-Creatures.

But this is an Extreme which you should also avoid. Endeavour to correct what is amiss in your natural Tempers, and to get them sweetened into more Mildness, Benevolence, and Love ; and cultivate a Spirit of Affability and Goodness. Practise all the innocent Arts of endearing yourselves to all about you. We are to *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour* ; and not to give Occasion to let our Good be evil spoken of. But I have mentioned something of this kind already, in the foregoing Part of this Discourse. But

3. It is with Pleasure I can profess my Belief and Hope, that many of you are so happy as to be in *Favour both with God and Man*.

May the Number of such be continually increased !——To you, I would beg leave to say ——Be very thankful to God for this Honour conferred upon you. To the Influences of his Grace and good Spirit you owe all the amiable Qualities which appear in you. It is he that hath given your Minds this happy Turn. Acknowledge

ledge his Hand, and beg his continued Mercy to you. And be gratefully sensible of your Obligations to your wife and Religious Parents and Instructors; who have been Instruments, in God's Hand, to form you to that Love of Wisdom and Virtue, which hath rendered you thus dear to God and Man. And O! labour to grow more and more so, by higher and further Improvements in every good Disposition and Quality. And take care that you do not, in your after-Conduct, suffer yourselves to be carried away into such irregularities and Follies of Life, as will spoil the Beauty of your present Character, and lay your Honour in the Dust. Many hopeful and promising Children have proved very wicked Men, and their *good Manners* have been quite *corrupted by evil Communications*: and they have grown, at length, hardened in Sin and abandoned to all Manner of Wickedness.—*Forbid it, O God of all Mercy, for Christ's Sake, that any of these hopeful Children before thee, should become fresh and mournful Instances of the Truth of this Observation! But fulfil in them the good Pleasure of thy Goodness; and save them from the Corruptions there are in the World, through Lust. Keep them in thy Name, that the Evil One touch them not.*

4. and lastly, If there be any young Persons here, who have, by their Sins and Follies, unhappily *forfeited the Love of God and Man*;

Let me earnestly beseech you, to reflect upon your past Conduct and Behaviour; and, by a

thorough Repentance, amend what hath been amiss before it be too late, and Things are come to Extremity.—*The Way of Transgressors is hard! O! cease to do Evil, learn to do well.* Be sensible of your Unhappiness, and do not obstinately harden yourselves in an evil Course. What Pleasure or Comfort can you have while God and Man both frown upon you! Be intreated therefore, to forsake all those foolish and vicious Practices, by which you have incurred the Displeasure of God, and lost the Esteem of Men. By a timely Repentance you will certainly recover God's Favour, through *Jesus Christ* the great Mediator. He stands ready to receive and bless you, if you will now return to him and your Duty. And where God forgives, Men ought to forgive; and not to upbraid with those Sins and Follies that are repented of, and forgiven. Return to the Paths of Virtue, and God and Man will be your Friends.—But if you will obstinately persist in an evil Course, and (like the unjust Judge which our Saviour speaks of, Luke xviii. 2.) *will neither fear God, nor regard Man*; you must take the Consequence. And believe it, Shame and Misery will very probably attend you in this Life; and will certainly be your Portion in the Life, or World, that is to come.

What say you now, my young Friends, upon the whole Matter?—May I not hope that it is your common Resolution (in the Strength of Divine Grace) so to walk and behave as to please

please God, and (as far as is consistent with that) to recommend yourselves to the Esteem and Love of all about you? You cannot want Motives to excite you to this. Nor must I, at this Time, attempt to recommend any. But I shall conclude with suggesting to you, a short and comprehensive Rule, by which you may attain the Qualifications and good Dispositions which have been recommended to you in this Discourse; and that is contained in these two Words (which I hope you will remember)——PRAYER and PAINS.

These choice Fruits, which I have been speaking of, grow not wild, or of their own Accord, in human Breasts. Vice and Folly, those ill Weeds, are the only natural Produce of that Soil. But Wisdom and Virtue require careful and diligent Cultivation, and are of Divine Original. Their Seeds descend from Heaven; and so do the Dews and Rains that cause them to shoot forth and flourish in the Soul. You must therefore continually look up to God, by earnest Prayer, that he would sow the Seeds of those good Dispositions in your Hearts; and cultivate them more and more by the gracious Influences of his holy Spirit, see *James* i. 5. and *Luke* xi. 13.——And so doing you should, on your Part, spare no Pains to acquire, improve, and strengthen them. And it is surely well worth your while so to do; nor can you bestow your Labour on any Thing that will turn to better Account. Consider the Excellency and amiable-

ness of those Christian Graces, and their great Importance to your present Comfort, and future Happiness! and watch against every Thing that is contrary to them.—Think how much Pains some poor Creatures take to make themselves miserable in both Worlds! And will any of you, my dear Friends, grudge to bestow a little Labour to beautify and adorn your Minds, and make you comfortable both here and hereafter?

I will now conclude, with those Words of St. Paul, Phil. iv. 8. *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these Things:—and the God of Peace shall be with you.—To him be Glory in the Churches by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages, World without End. Amen.*

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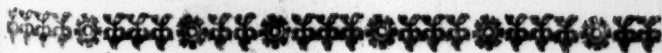


*The Importance of attending to the Nature of
our Souls.*

SERMON VII.

PREACHED

OCTOBER 4, 1738.



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JOB xxxii. 8.

But there is a Spirit in Man: and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth them Understanding.



It is a plain, but very important and comprehensive, Truth which I have chosen, O my young Friends, to recommend to your Meditation at this Time. And I flatter my-

self that the Consideration of it will be of singular Use and Advantage to you, if you will be pleased seriously to attend to it, and God will be pleased to impress it, with Power upon your Hearts, by his Grace and holy Spirit.

I am come to proclaim this Day in your Ears, that *there is a Spirit in Man*; in every Man, and in every one of your Breasts; a reasonable, intelligent and immortal Spirit: whose Interests claim your first and chief Care. You have Bodies, indeed, also which you ought not to neglect; but you should remember that these are not the Principal, or most noble, Part of the human

human Composition, but of a Nature far inferior to that noble Principle with which they are animated. According to the Sentiments of the heathen Moralists themselves, the Soul is the Man, *Animus cujusque hic est quisque.*

But it is the Unhappiness of a great Part of Mankind, that they either do not believe, or do not attend to this Truth; but live and act as if they imagined, indeed, that they had no Souls within them; or at least, as if their Souls were of no Value or Consideration. And the Conduct of some young Persons particularly, gives one but too much Reason to suspect that they act under the Influence of such Sentiments. And this is the unhappy Source of their Neglect of God, and of their Disregard to all those Things that are necessary to their Acceptance with him, and their final Salvation.

Nothing, therefore, can be of greater Service towards securing the Virtue of younger Minds, and preserving them from the Snares of Sin and Vice, and engaging them betimes for God and a holy Life, than the possessing them with a deep and a lively Apprehension of the sacred Truth we are now to discourse on, *viz.* that *there is a Spirit, or a Soul, in Man.*

I will not pretend to assert, that the primary Sense of the Words I have now read to you, when critically considered in relation to the Context is exactly conformed to the Sound of them expressed in our Translation; or to the Use

propose at present to make of them. But that is of no great Importance in the present Case; because the Stress of what I have to offer upon them will not rest upon this Text only; and because whatever may be supposed to be the primary Intention of them, must of necessity include the Truth of the View in which I now consider them.

Elihu, a pious and prudent young Man, had been present during the long Debate between *Job* and his three Friends. His Modesty would not suffer him to interrupt their Discourse, though he did not like the Manner in which they carried it on. Out of Reverence to his Superiors in Age he stood silent, till at length the Debate was finished; in the Conclusion of which (as is common in most Debates) both Sides remained unconvinced: *Job's* Friends persisting in their Condemnation of him, and he persisting in the Defence of his own Integrity. And now at length, *Elihu* speaks; and, young as he was, speaks much more to the Purpose than the three aged Disputants, who spoke before him; and sets the Matter upon a right Foot. Instead of Condemning *Job*, as a Hypocrite and a wicked Man, merely because of his great Afflictions, as his uncharitable Friends had done, he only reproves him (where indeed he deserved some Rebuke) for having, in the anguish of his Soul, spoke with too much Freedom concerning the Administrations of Providence, and dropped Expressions which,
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did not altogether become the Lips of a Man of his Piety and Goodness. And we find that *Job* was himself sensible of his Defect, and fell under the Rebuke; nor did he attempt to make any Reply, but suffered *Elibu* to go on without any Interruption. And, what is still more for this young Man's Honour, when God himself interposed, and addressed himself to *Job*, he proceeded upon the same Foot of Reasoning as *Elibu* had begun upon.

The Chapter where my Text is, contains the Preface or Introduction which *Elibu* made to his Speech. And it is full of strong Sense, and great Modesty. I will mention no more of it than what relates to the Illustration of the Text, but it is throughout beautiful. Let us therefore read, if you please, the 6, 7, 8, and 9. Verses. Ver. 6. *And Elibu the Son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you my Opinion.* Ver. 7. *I said, Days should speak, and multitude of Years should teach Wisdom.* Ver. 8. *But there is a Spirit in Man: (a) and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth them Understanding.* Ver. 9. *Great Men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand Judgment.*

Now taking the Words thus, in Connection with the Context, I am inclined to think, that by the Spirit, in the first Part of the Verse, meant

(a) Or more strictly according to the Original, *But the Spirit, He is Man, &c.*

meant the same Thing with *the Inspiration of the Almighty*, in the second. And then the Sense will be thus:—‘ I see that it is not meer
 ‘ Length of Days which can give Men Wisdom
 ‘ and Understanding. No, it is the Breath of
 ‘ God, and *the Inspiration of the Almighty*, that
 ‘ is the Source and Fountain of all valuable
 ‘ Knowledge in Men. It is by means of Com-
 ‘ munications from above, that one Man be-
 ‘ comes wiser than another, and not by meer
 ‘ superiority of Age.’

But admitting this to be the primary, and more critical, Sense of the Text, (as I believe it is) yet, as I said, this will of Necessity imply the Truth of the Sense expressed in our Translation. For there must be a Spirit in Man, a reasonable, intelligent Spirit, capable of receiving those Communications from above, those *Inspirations of the Almighty*, which are the Sources of Wisdom and Understanding: neither, indeed, could there be any such Thing at all, as Wisdom and Understanding in Man, if there were not a Spirit or Mind within him, to be the Seat or Subject of them.

I hope what I have now offered, will be sufficient to justify me in considering the Words in the View I propose at present to treat of them; exhibiting this great and important Truth, which I am more especially desirous to impress on the Minds of young Persons, but which

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deserves to be seriously remembered by us all, viz.

That there is a Spirit, or a Soul, in Man.

By the Spirit, or the Soul, which we say is in Man, is meant, in general, that Principle within us by which we perceive, Understand, think, reason, know, chuse, desire, love, and the like; which are Operations that Matter (of which our Bodies consist) is utterly incapable of.

And that there is such a *Spirit in Man*, cannot but be evident to every one, that in the least attends to what passes in his own Breast, or in the World round about him. Nor is it the Design of the present Discourse to attempt to prove by philosophical or abstract reasoning, the Thing which every Man is conscious to himself of. The Actions, Writings, and Conversations, of Mankind plainly enough speak this Truth; and every Man finds and feels it written on his own Heart. Indeed, if there were not a *Spirit in Man*, it would be impossible either for me to compose or for you to understand, a Discourse upon this or any other Subject. Wherefore, omitting the former Proof of the Proposition in the Text, as being altogether unnecessary, especially to those who believe the Truth and Authority of the holy Scriptures, as I presume we all do; I apprehend it will be more useful for me to consider the Subject in the following Method.

I. I would offer, to my young Friends, some general Observations on the Nature and Dignity of the human Soul, and the Situation it is now in.

II. I shall represent the Importance, and Advantage, of being early possessed with a lively Apprehension of this Truth, that *there is a Spirit in Man.*—And, to each of these two Heads I shall adjoin some Reflections, by way of Application.

I. I would offer, to my young Friends, some general Observations on the Nature and Dignity of the human Soul, and the Situation it is now in.

I must not allow myself to mention every Thing, that could properly enough be offered on such a Head as this, but must restrain myself within the Limits of the few following Particulars.

1. *The Soul of Man is a Principle distinct from, and superior to the Body.*

It is an immaterial, or incorporeal Being; quite another kind of Thing than the Body is; which, in all possible Shapes and Forms, cannot be the Subject of such Properties, or the Principle of such Actions, as a Spirit is. And as it is distinct from the Body, so it is vastly superior to it. It is of a higher, or more sublime Original; the

Body being made out of the *Dust* of the *Earth*, but the *Spirit* derived from the more immediate *Breath* of the *Almighty*, (*Gen. ii. 7.*) who is the *Father of Spirits*. (b)

It is in our *Souls* that we resemble *God*, who is a pure and perfect *Spirit*.

Upon this *Distinction* of the *Soul* from the *Body*, and its incomparably superior *Worth* and *Excellence*, is that *Exhortation* of our *Saviour* founded, which we read in *Mat. x. 28.* *Fear not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul.* And hence *Solomon* observes (*Ecclef. xii. 7.*) that at *Death* the *Dust* (i. e. the *Body* whose *Original* is *Dust*) returns to the *Earth* as it was; but the *Spirit* returns to *God* who gave it. For though the *Soul* be for a while united with the *Body*, yet as it is a distinct principle from it, it is capable of existing without it, in a *State of Separation* from it.—Let me further observe,

2. *That the Soul of Man is endowed with vast Capacities; Capacities of Knowledge, Action, and Enjoyment.*

It is astonishing to reflect, what prodigious Measures of *Knowledge* the *Soul* is capable of receiving, and attaining to, even in this present *State*! The vast *Improvements* made of late *Years*, in all the *Parts* and *Branches* of natural *Philosophy*, and *Astronomy*, furnish us with great

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(b) Hence the *Heathen Poet* calls it, (*Divine particula*)
—a *Particle of Divine Breath*.

Ideas of the Capacities of the human Soul. Strange! that such little Worms as we seem to be, should be able, by Contemplation, to range through the Works of God, in Heaven and Earth, in Air and Sea; adjust and determine the Motions and Revolutions of the heavenly Bodies; assign the Causes of the Flux and Reflux of the Sea; and resolve the abstrusest Mathematical Problems! Sure there is a Soul in Man; and a Soul which, with proper Helps and Advantages, is capable of great Things!

And from the Contemplation of the Works of God, we are able to rise up to the Acknowledgement and Adoration of the great *first Cause* of all Things; to discern and converse with Him *who is invisible*; receive the Tokens of his Favour and Love; and render him the Tribute of our Praise and Thanksgiving. These are Faculties and Operations which distinguish Mankind from the Brute Creatures round about us, and raise us far above them in the Scale of Being. Our Maker hath certainly taught us *more than the Beasts of the Field, and made us wiser than the Fowls of Heaven*, Job xxxv. 11.

But further, after the utmost Lengths of Knowledge we can possibly attain to here, there is an insatiable Thirst after more and higher Measures of it. The Soul is still comparatively empty, hath room for infinite more Ideas, and still cries, *give, give.*

This Observation also holds good, with relation to the large and unconfined *Desires* of the Soul after *Happiness*. Nothing can fill up the vast and boundless Cravings of the Mind, short of some infinite Good. Give it the Possession of a whole World, this indeed may amuse it for a while, but will not satisfy. Add yet another and another, or, if you please, a thousand Worlds, the Soul will still crave, and find a Void within itself; which, as I said, nothing can fill up, short of the Possession of an Infinite and Everlasting Good.

From these few Hints you may be able to form a Judgment of the great Capacities of the Soul of Man, of the *Spirit that is within us*. I add,

III. (What deserves our particular Consideration) *That our Souls are made and designed for Immortality.*

It is this which adds a Nobleness and Grandeur to the Human Nature. The Body is Dust, and to Dust it will return, till the great Resurrection Day; but the Soul survives, and will continue to live for ever: being immaterial it hath no Principles of Dissolution in it, as the Body hath; and is therefore, as I said, *made for Immortality*,

This Doctrine, of the Immortality of the Soul was taught by the wisest and best of the heathen the

then Philosophers; and is, indeed, a Truth most conformable to Reason, and may be fairly inferred from the vast Capacities and Desires the Creator hath endowed us with; such as would reflect on his Wisdom and Goodness, on any other Consideration, than that of our being designed for an immortal Existence: for if we were created only to spend a few Years in this World, and then to perish and be no more, our Faculties would be exceedingly disproportionate to their Ends and Uses; which would cast a Reflection on the Wisdom of our Creator.——But this Doctrine is established, beyond all possibility of Doubt or Dispute, by the Christian Revelation, which hath brought *Life and Immortality to Light*, 2 Tim. i. 10.

But then, let it be remembered, that though Immortality be the Honour of every human Soul, and though this is, doubtless in itself, a very high Privilege; yet whether such future Eternal Existence will be eventually Happy or Miserable, depends, under God, on our present Conduct. God hath placed us here, in a State of Trial for a future Eternity; and we learn, from the Sacred Oracles of God's Word, that there are everlasting Scenes of Happiness, and everlasting Scenes of Misery, which respectively attend the Race of Mankind according as it shall be found, they behaved well or ill during their present Abode here. And this is Matter of awful Consideration.

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But, what is still more alarming, (and which I mention on Purpose to strike and alarm your Minds) these Immortal Souls of ours are not only liable to be for ever miserable, but are actually in great Danger of being so. We have many, and those powerful and subtle, Enemies, that are plotting our Destruction; and we are surrounded with Snares and Temptations; and, in Consequence of our Original Apostacy from God, our Souls themselves, through the Influence of the Body, are too much enslaved to Sense, and estranged from God their proper Felicity. And, in this Situation, if we are not vigilant and careful, our Souls will be in imminent Hazard of being lost for ever.

But though our Danger be great, and our Enemies many; yet let us remember, for our Comfort, that the Grace of God in *Jesus Christ*, can render us superior to all our Enemies, and enable us to come off *more than Conquerors*. And this Grace, and Help from above, will assuredly be bestowed upon us, in Proportion to our Difficulties, Dangers, and Wants, if we humbly and earnestly implore it at the Hands of God, through *Jesus Christ* the Mediator.

Having thus suggested some few Observations, concerning the Nature, and Greatness of the human Soul, and the Situation it is now in; let us here pause a while: and, before we proceed to the *second* Head of Discourse, make two or three

three Reflections upon what hath been offered under the *first*. And,

1. You may hence learn, what Thoughts you ought to have of your Souls, and in what View you should Consider them.

You are to regard your Souls as the best and noblest Part of the human Constitution. They should be precious in your Eyes, and valued as a Treasure, as a Pearl of great Price; they should be to you as *David's* was to him, your Darling, *Psal. xxxv. 17*. And you are also to consider them as Talents trusted to your Care, for which you are hereafter to give an Account at the Bar of God. Such are the Sentiments which you should entertain of your Souls. And what great Service it would be to you, to carry about with you such Apprehensions of them, is easy to imagine.

2. What an egregious Piece of Folly is it, which the Generality of Mankind are guilty of, who neglect and despise their own Souls! Souls that claim so noble an Original, are endowed with such vast Capacities, and framed for Immortality; and (to mention another and a noble Argument of the Worth and Dignity of the human Soul) redeemed by the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ*! What Pity is it such Souls as these should be neglected, and suffered to perish for ever, for want of a little Care taken about them! And yet, in Fact, the greater Part of Mankind are thus amazingly foolish, in Relation to their
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precious and immortal Souls. They are diligent and industrious enough to secure the Gratifications of the Body, and the Animal Life; but what will become of their Souls, is little or no Part of their Concern. As if these were Things of no Account, and not deserving a serious Thought.—But what a Piece of Madness is this! how contrary to all the Rules of Wisdom and Reason, and even common Sense! And how dreadful the Issue will be, would make One's Heart even bleed to think!—The Light of the future State will give such poor Creatures other Apprehensions of the Worth and Dignity of their Souls. But if, *in this their Day*, they will not *know* or consider *the Things that belong to their Eternal Peace*, it will be too late hereafter. —Wherefore let me take Occasion

3. To exhort you, my young Friends, to resolve, by the Grace of God, that whatever others do, you will not neglect your Souls, but will carefully attend to their Felicity.

You see their Nature and Dignity is such as deserves your care, and their present Situation such as demands it, and makes it necessary; and all the Principles of Reason in the World will justify you in so doing. And, what is more, God will approve your Conduct, and, will of his Grace in *Jesus Christ*, abundantly reward your wise and rational Care of your best Selves; I mean *your Souls*.

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But it is Time I should now proceed to the second and last Part of my Discourse, in which I propose

II. To represent to you the Importance, and Advantage, of being early possessed with a lively Apprehension of this great Truth, that *there is a Spirit in Man.*

Now this Apprehension would be of eminent Advantage to you, in these two comprehensive respects; *viz.* as it would, under God, be a very happy *Preservative against the Snares and Follies of Youth*, and a powerful *Excitement to early Religion*.—Permit me to offer a few Thoughts to you under each of these Heads, and I will draw my Discourse to a Close.

1. A lively Perswasion of this Truth, that *there is a Spirit in Man*, (and a Spirit of such a Nature, and in such a Situation, as has been above described) would, under God, be a mighty *Preservative against the Sins and Snares of Youth*.

All, that know any Thing of Mankind, allow the Time of Youth to be the most dangerous Season of Life; the Appetites, and Passions being then strong, and Reason, for the most Part, weak. So that if there be no Principle to keep the Mind steady, there is great Danger of being led astray from the Paths of Wisdom and Innocence. Now the serious Belief and lively
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Apprehension of this great Truth we are considering, would (under God, and as instrumental to the Operations of his Grace) be a Sort of Ballast to the Soul.—The better to illustrate what I mean, I shall apply this Observation to some particular Dispositions of young Persons, and some special Snares which attend them.

Young Persons are generally very fond of *Sports* and *Pastimes*, and such Exercises as go under the Notion of *Diversions*.—And, without Doubt, some Gratifications of this kind are very allowable to that Age; and under proper Regulations are not only innocent, but very useful. But if this Disposition be not somewhat corrected, by Reason and Wisdom, it will be apt to beget in them an Aversion to every Thing that is serious, and endanger the Virtue of their Minds. Now this Thought deeply impressed upon their Heart, (*I have a Spirit within me, a reasonable and immortal Spirit*) would certainly give a Check to all extravagant and immoderate Desires after Things of this Nature; and would convince a young Creature that he hath higher and greater Things to mind; and prevent his squandering away too much of his precious Time in such Things as are beneath the Dignity, and inconsistent with the Welfare, of a reasonable Soul, to be inordinately delighted in.

And this Thought would also be of Service in relation to that *Love of Company*, which is in a Sort natural to young Persons. It would at least

least make them somewhat cautious in the Choice of their Companions, and avoid (as much as may be) the Society of those whose Company is like to be a Snare to their Souls.

Moreover, in the Season of Youth, when the Constitution is strong, and the animal Passions eager and violent, there is danger of being hurried away by the Power of *youthful Lusts*; such particularly are *sensual Impurities*: in the Snares whereof Multitudes of young Creatures have been unhappily entangled, to their utter Destruction in both Worlds; who, by God's Grace, might and would have been preserved from their fatal Influence, had they been penetrated with the Thought of their having *Souls within them*, intelligent, immortal Souls, made to rule the Appetites of animal Nature, and not to be ruled by them; and too precious to be sacrificed to the momentary Gratifications of an irregular Lust.

The same may be said in relation to another Vice, which, though it is not indeed so peculiar to young People, is yet practised but too much by some of them; I mean the Vice of *drinking to excess*: which is a Sin that no Man can customarily commit, who carries about him a lively Sense of this Truth, *I have a Spirit within me.* Is it for a Man that hath a reasonable Soul within him, to confound his Reason, and sink himself into a Brute! Into a Brute, did I say? No, it is something lower than that. For the Brute Creatures are hardly ever thus intoxicated; In-

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stinct

stinct being a more powerful Principle in them,
 than Reason is in many that are called Men.
 How mean and contemptible a Figure does
 Man make, if we were to form a Judgment of
 him by the Appearance he makes when *disguis-*
ed (as we very properly and emphatically term
 it) in his Cups! Is this *Man*; the Head and
 Lord of this lower World! Is this he, to whom
the Inspiration of the Almighty hath given superior
Understanding; and endowed with sublime and
 exalted Capacities! How art thou fallen!—I
 beseech you all, and you, more especially, my
 young Friends, to whom I am this Day more
 peculiarly addressing myself, that you would stand
 upon your Guard against this Vice, and all the
 Temptations to it.—To this End remember,
 that *there is a Spirit within you.*

There is in some Tempers, more especially, a
 Disposition to *Idleness* and *Sloth*, and an Aversion
 to any Thing that requires Pains and Labour;
 and this Indolence of Disposition hath been the
 Ruin of many young Persons. But if there be
a Spirit in Man, and *the Inspiration of the Al-*
mighty hath breathed into every reasonable and
 immortal Soul, we may well imagine it is for
 some valuable Purpose we are so made; and that
 we have something else to do than to sit with
 our Hands folded before us, and indulge to
 Laziness and Sloth; which is a Disgrace to that
 noble Principle with which we are endowed.

But

But, on the other hand, there is Danger of being too *rash* and *inconsiderate*, and of being pressed on by the Fire of Youth to attempt the most imprudent Things, without consulting the reasonable Principle within them, and weighing before hand the Consequences of their Actions, as the *Spirit of a Man* would teach them to do. — Again.

The *World* appears to young People as a *charming Thing*. The Riches and Gayeties of it are apt to strike their Imaginations, and kindle in their Breasts Desires after it, ardent and excessive, as if it were the chief Good of Man. But if I seriously consider, that I have an intelligent Spirit within me, that is made for Immortality, and now is on it's Trial for Eternity, this will abate the Ardour of my Desires after the Enjoyments of this World; which are comparatively so mean in their Nature, and so short in their Duration, that I may easily preceive them not to be a suitable, or a satisfying Portion for a *Soul*. *And what would it profit me, should I gain the whole World, and lose my Soul?* Mat. xvi. 26. Alas! I am a Wretch undone for ever. — Once more,

A *Dread of Singularity, and a vicious Shame*, has been, and is still, a very great Hinderance to many young Persons in the Affairs of Religion. Shame is one of the strongest Passions in the human Nature; and it exerts it's Influence most in the Season of Youth, and is designed to be the

great Hedge of Modesty and Virtue. But this, like other Things good of themselves, may be perverted to ill Purposes; and without Doubt is so, when we are ashamed of that which is really our Glory, as Religion is.—As Things ordinarily go in the World, those that would be religious in good earnest, must expect to be singular in some Cases, and derided for being so. But the firm Belief that we have Souls within us, should inspire us with a noble Courage, not to comply with any Thing which our Reason or our Consciences disapprove, let who will practise otherwise. The Favour of God, and the Everlasting Happiness of our Souls, are Things too valuable and precious to be sacrificed to the Humours and Vices of a profane World. It is surely better to run the Hazard of being their Scoff, than to lose our Souls to avoid it. (c)

I hope I have mentioned Instances and Cases enough, (and many more might be added) to prove and illustrate the Truth of this first Observation, viz.—*that a serious Belief, and a lively Apprehension of this great Truth, THAT THERE IS A SPIRIT IN MAN, would be (under God) a happy Preservative to young Persons, against the Sins and Snares of Youth.*—It now remains that I shew,

2. That

(c) *Heaven were little worth indeed, if it were not worth the bearing the Scoff of a Company of Fools, who are themselves but tending to Hell.* Baxter.

2. That it would be also a powerful *Excitement to early Religion.*

And this I shall do more briefly, as it cannot be necessary to enlarge, or multiply Words, in so plain a Case. For, if I am feelingly persuaded that I have a Spirit within me, a rational, intelligent, immortal Spirit, I cannot but perceive that this is by much the highest, and most noble Part of my Nature; that the Soul is indeed the *Man*: and that I am really happy or miserable, according to the State in which my Soul is, and consequently, that it must needs be my first and chief Concern, to cultivate the Interests, and secure the Felicity of my Soul. And such a Disposition will infallibly lead on to God and Religion. For, as it is impossible for any Man to be truly religious, who hath no regard to his Soul; so, on the other Hand, it is not to be supposed that any Man can long remain Irreligious, who is acquainted with the Dignity, and duly concerned for the Happiness of his Soul.

If we know any Thing of our Souls, and are suitably affected with the Apprehension of the Greatness of their Capacities, and their Designation for Immortality, we shall soon perceive that nothing but God can make them happy; and that, therefore, it infinitely concerns us to secure the Divine Favour and Friendship. And how this may be obtained, we, who are Christians, are most satisfactorily instructed by the

Gospel of *Jesus Christ*. And, agreeably to the Demands of it, we fly to *Jesus Christ*, the Mediator between God and sinful Men, and the great and only Saviour of lost Souls; and put our Souls into his Hands, to be washed, healed, purified, and saved by him: desiring at the same Time the Influences of the holy Spirit of God, to enlighten our Minds, and rectify those Disorders which we find in our Hearts, and to strengthen and assist us in our Endeavours to please God, and to obtain his final Approbation through *Jesus Christ*.

From such Exercises and Dispositions as these, will flow a Series and Course of Religious Actions in the Life and Conversation. Particularly, in Consequence of such Sentiments and Transactions, we shall be led to a daily Converse with God by *serious Prayer*, and shall not be content to live any longer *without God*, and *without Prayer*, *in the World*. — The *sacred Scriptures* will be our constant and delightful Study, that we may from thence know how we should walk and please God. And we shall make Conscience of our Thoughts, our Words, and Actions, in all the following Scenes of Life; and of our whole Deportment, towards God, ourselves, and others, as those who believe themselves under the Eye of God, and who are desirous of pleasing, and afraid of offending him, on whom the everlasting Interests of our Souls depend; and we shall be excited to make provision

sion for the Happiness of our never dying Spirits, when the Body shall be resolved into its original Dust. And whoever lives after such a Manner as this, may justly be esteemed a Religious Man, and will be finally accepted of God through *Jesus Christ*.

I hope it is now very evident (from the short Sketch I have given of the Matter) that a Mind possessed and penetrated with the serious Apprehension of this great Truth, I have been discoursing on, *that there is a Spirit in Man*, will, by God's Grace, soon become Religious. And it is then as evident, that the sooner such Apprehensions enter into and possess the Mind, the sooner will it become Religious; and, consequently, that such Apprehensions made in the Minds of young Persons, must, under God, be a powerful Excitement to early Religion.

It is Time I should now draw my Discourse to a Close.

What say you then, my young Friends?— Shall I persuade you, from this Day forward, to consider and live under the Influence of this Truth, *that there is a Spirit in Man*? Will you promise me to remember the Lesson of this Day, and be often thinking of it?—It is a short and easy Lesson, and will neither burden your Memories to retain it, nor confound your Understandings to think of it, and to pursue it into its Consequences with Application to yourselves. But it is a very important Lesson; and, as
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appears, from what hath been said, the Everlasting Happiness of your Immortal Souls very much depends on the Regard you pay to it. If you remember this short Lesson, you may, by God's Grace, be the better for it as long as you Live; you may be the better for it to all Eternity. O! that *the Inspiration of the Almighty* may give you this important Piece of *Understanding*, to *love, and value your Souls*; and excite you to a becoming Solicitude about your present and eternal Welfare! It is his Grace which can effectually preserve you from the common Folly of Mankind, in neglecting their Souls. To him therefore look up through *Jesus Christ*; and implore those Communications of Wisdom and Grace, which, God knows, your Weakness and your Temptations make necessary for the Safety and Happiness of your Souls. The *Father of Spirits*, will not deny, to his Offspring, what he sees they want, and what they earnestly desire him to bestow.

If any of you have hitherto lived in a careless Neglect of your precious and immortal Souls; O that you may be now sensible of your Sin and Folly; and may this Day resolve, by God's Grace, that you will *bear, and fear, and do no more so wickedly and foolishly*! And to encourage you to return to God, and your Duty, whatever may have been the particular Instances of your past Disobedience and Folly, let me put you in mind of the kind Reception which the Prodigal

Son,

Son, in the Parable, met with from his Father. When that poor Creature, who had brought himself into a State of extreme Want by his Follies and Extravagance, was awakened to a better Mind, and returning to his Father's House; we are told, that whilst he was yet a great Way off his Father saw him, ran to meet him, and embraced him in the Tenderest Manner, falling upon his Neck and kissing him: and instead of upbraiding him with his Sins and Follies, ordered a Feast to be made, with Musick and Dancing, to express his Joy for the return of his Son; see, Luke xv.—Wonderful is the Grace of God to repenting Sinners! Arise therefore, and penitently return to God thy Father, through *Jesus Christ*; and he will forgive thy Sins, and put thee among his Children. How can any of you be easy, how can you be chearful, whilst your precious Souls are every Moment in Danger of perishing, and you have taken no Care to save them?

Nor say within yourselves; 'I am young, and have many Years before me; it is Time enough to think of these grave Affairs of the Soul, and its Eternal Existence in another World, sometime hence.'—Alas! my dear Friends, your Souls are too precious to be thus trifled with. You cannot begin too soon to take Care of the immortal Principle within you. Our real Comfort in this World, depends upon our having the Eternal Interest of the Soul settle

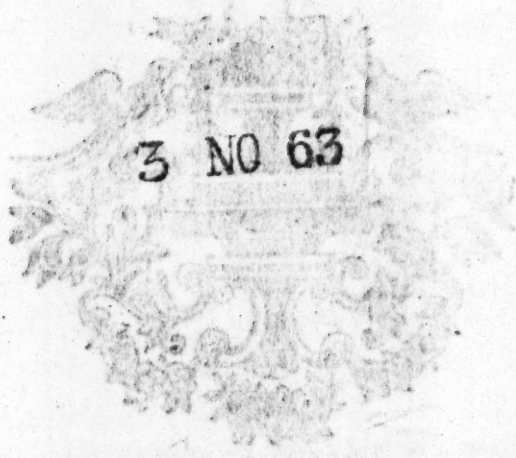
settled and secured, and being prepared for a better State. It is *at most* but a little Time you can hope to live in this World. And this Time is as precarious, as it is short. Death may arrest you in younger Life, and carry your Souls to the Bar of God, there to receive their final Sentence, and be fixed to Eternity. And what a Case will you then be in, if you have made no Preparation for such an Event!——It is Madness for Creatures in such a Situation as we are, whose *Breath is in our Nostrils*, to neglect improving present Seasons for securing an Eternal Well-being hereafter, in a fond Expectation of future Ones; when we cannot trust ourselves, but acknowledge that we are liable to a Disappointment; and when we know, that the Consequences of being disappointed, are no less than the Everlasting Loss of our precious and immortal Souls.

But if the *Interests of our Souls* are settled and secured, by being devoted to God and Christ, and animated and enobled with the Principles and Hopes of Religion; how comfortably may we live! and how Comfortably shall we dye!——God will be *our Guide even unto Death*, and will afterwards receive us to his Glory. His Blessing will attend us through all the Steps of this mortal Life; and when we come to the Period of it, his Angels will convey our Spirits safe to the heavenly Regions above, the Seats of immortal Joy and Bliss.——And at the great Resurrection Day, we shall also be convinced, that the Care

we

we took for the Happiness of our *Souls*, was the best Thing we could do for the Safety and Welfare of our *Bodies*; for these shall then be raised incorruptible, glorious, and immortal; and shall bear a Part in the Enjoyments of the Blessed above. To which happy World and State, may God of his Mercy, bring us all, through *Jesus Christ*! to whom be Glory for ever and ever; *Amen*!





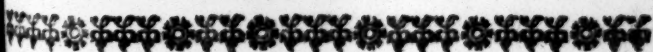


*The Hearts of Young People demanded for
God.*

S E R M O N VIII.

P R E A C H E D

OCTOBER 6, 1742.



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House of Commons
1742

N VIII



PAYMENT

OCTOBER 6, 1742

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PROV. xxiii. 26.

My Son, give me thine Heart.——



A P P E A R here this Day, my young Friends, to demand you for God, and to put in his Claim for your Love and Service.—— You are desired to consider the Words I have read to you as a solemn Message, from the great God of Heaven and Earth, directed to you ; conceived indeed in Terms of the most endearing Affection, and parental Tenderness.——*My Son, give me thine Heart.——*O, that *that* God whose Cause I am pleading would *send me good Speed this Day!* And, whilst I am urging the Justice and Equity of his sacred Demands, and the unspeakable Advantage of your Compliance with them, that he would be pleased himself powerfully to plead his own Cause, with the vital Grace and Energy of his own Holy Spirit ; without which the most moving Addresses of a *Paul*, or an *Apollos*, would have no suitable or lasting Effect!

I confess that these Words are, in the most strict and immediate Sense, an Address of *Solomon* to his Son, or to any other young Person whom he vouchsafes to instruct, and to whom he speaks in the tender Language of a Parent; the more to express his own Concern, and the better to engage their Attention.—But, I hope, no one will think this is at all inconsistent with the Use I propose to make of them: both because there are a great many other Places of Scripture wherein such Claims and Demands are, indisputably, made in the Name of God himself; and especially because the Regards which Pious Parents, or Christian Ministers, or other Instructors of young Persons, desire and demand of them do finally aim at this, the bringing them to God.

It is with no other View, my young Friends, that we desire you to give us your Hearts, but only that we may engage them for God. Grant us but this, and we have our utmost wishes from you. You may therefore very justly conceive that God himself lays claim to you in the Words of the Text; and you may, in Effect, hear him say to you, ‘*My Son, or my Daughter, give me thine Heart.*’ And I hope you will not be disobedient to the Divine Voice, or *reject him who speaketh to you from Heaven.* For, be it known to you that, whosoever despiseth this sacred Admonition, *despiseth not Man, but God.*

You must already perceive where it is I design to lay the Stress of the following Discourse;

and

and that it is not my present Intention, so much to urge upon you the giving your Hearts to God, in Opposition to Hypocrisy and mere external Devotion, as the giving your Hearts, that is, yourselves to him, preferably to all other Competitors for your Affection.

You will doubtless find many courting your youthful Affections, and endeavouring to engage your Hearts to them; particularly the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*, and your vain and wicked *Companions*.—Mighty Things the *World* promises it will do for you, if you set your Heart upon that, you will have Riches and Honours, and I know not what Abundance of good Things, which it spreads before your Imaginations, saying, as the Devil once did to our Saviour, *all these Things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*, Mat. iv. 8, 9—
‘Mind your Pleasures and sensual Gratifications,’ saith the *Flesh*: ‘now is your Time for them; do not be so foolish as to let slip the present Season; Time runs away apace, and old Age will insensibly creep upon you. Enjoy your Pleasures whilst you may; it is Time enough to think of Religion hereafter.—Break off the Shackles of your Education, will your loose *Companions* say, and come and live in that free and unconfined Manner that we do. Why should you be confined within that narrow Circle, which your grave old Parents, or your Ministers, and Teachers, have drawn round about

‘you? Exert your Spirits, and assert your own Freedom. Break through these Restraints of Conscience, and, I know not what, mere Fancies and Bugbears.’—Now, in the Midst of these Rivals for your Affection, God as it were steps in, and by the Ministry of his Word, and the whisperings of his Spirit, saith to the young Creature; ‘*My Son, give me thine Heart.*’ Or, according to the order of the Words in the Original, which makes them run a little more emphatically to our present Purpose, *Give, my Son, thine Heart to ME.*

Have you never found, my young Friends, any such Motions as these made to your Consciences? I perswade myself some of you at least have. It was the Voice of God within you, though it is possible you did not attend to it with that Regard and Obedience, which you ought to have paid to it; and that the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, did soon erase the Impression made by it, and diverted your Attention to other Objects. However, the blessed God is so good to you, and hath so affectionate Concern for your true Felicity, that he renews his Applications to you; and would fain prevent that Misery and Destruction which must be the necessary Consequence of your alienating yourselves from him, (the true and only Source of Happiness to all reasonable Creatures,) and bestowing your Affections on other Objects.—Behold, this Day is God calling to you, by his unworthy Servant
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that is now ministring before you (O! that you would hear and obey the Divine Call!) *My Son, give me thine Heart.*

Now as it is a Matter of vast Consequence, both to your present and eternal Welfare, on whom you bestow your Hearts, and as beside the blessed God there are other Rivals for your Affections, such as I have above-mentioned; let me entreat you not to dispose of yourselves rashly and foolishly, but weigh the Matter soberly and carefully in your own Thoughts. And, in order to assist your Determinations upon this Point (the giving of your Hearts,) let me desire you to consider seriously and carefully these two Things; viz,—*Who hath the greatest Claim to your Hearts;—And where you can bestow them to the greatest Advantage.*—Upon these the ensuing Discourse will turn.—And if it shall appear upon Examination, (as I doubt not but it will) that the Blessed God hath the fullest and fairest Claim to your Hearts, and that you cannot dispose of yourselves any where else with equal Advantage; I hope you will then, with Pleasure, resign yourselves up into his Hands, and consecrate your Hearts to his Love and Service through *Jesus Christ*.

I. The first Thing proposed, as the Subject of Consideration in the present Case is, *Who hath the greatest Claim to your Hearts.*

Sit down, my young Friends, and turn this Matter a little over in your own Minds.—

‘ Here,

‘ Here, say you, I am surrounded with various
 ‘ Competitors for this Heart of mine. The
 ‘ blessed God demands me for himself ; and the
 ‘ Lord *Jesus Christ* claims my Heart : and un-
 ‘ der them my Christians, Parents, Ministers, and
 ‘ Instructors, desire me to give them my Heart,
 ‘ that they may engage it for God and the Re-
 ‘ deemer, whose Cause and Interest they profess
 ‘ to plead. On the other Hand, Sin, and Satan,
 ‘ the World, and the Flesh, and with them
 ‘ some gay Companions, urge me to bestow my
 ‘ Heart upon them.—What shall I do in the
 ‘ Case ? Why, examine the Merits of their re-
 ‘ spective Pretensions, and soberly consider who
 ‘ hath the justest and most equitable Claim to
 ‘ thy Affections.—Behold, saith the great God,
 ‘ my Hands hath made thee and fashioned thee,
 ‘ and I breathed into thee the Breath of Life,
 ‘ and made thee a living and a reasonable Soul.
 ‘ *All Souls are mine ; as the Soul of the Father,*
 ‘ *so also the Soul of the Son is mine,* Ezek. xviii.
 ‘ 4. and as I gave thee Being at first, so my
 ‘ *Visitation hath preserved thy Spirit,* and up-
 ‘ held thy Soul in Life ever since. Thou hast
 ‘ lived upon the Provisions of my Bounty, and
 ‘ by the Care of my watchful Providence over
 ‘ thee, hast, thou been preserved from innumera-
 ‘ ble Evils, that have been round about thee.
 ‘ I am the great Father of Spirits, and they are
 ‘ all my Offspring ; and I bear a paternal Love
 ‘ and

‘and Affection for the Work of my Hands;
‘and as such call thee *my Son*, and demand
‘filial Love and Obedience from thee! How
‘often hast thou provoked me with thy Sins?
‘and I have born with thy Transgressions; and
‘instead of destroying thee, as I could easily
‘have done in a Moment, have with much long
‘suffering waited to be gracious to thee! Nay,
‘I sent my only begotten Son to redeem and
‘save thee, when fallen into a State of Sin and
‘Misery; to redeem and save thee by dying him-
‘self for thee, to make Attonement for thy Trans-
‘gressions.——Thou owest me therefore thine
‘Heart, and all that thou hast. These my De-
‘mands from thee, are such as thy own Consci-
‘ence tells thee are indisputably just and equal,
‘give me, therefore, *thine Heart!*’

In like Manner, the Redeemer, the Lord *Je-
sus Christ*, puts in his Claim, and says; ‘I left
‘the Bosom of my Father, and united myself
‘to Flesh and Blood, that I might be capable of
‘suffering and dying for thee, to recover and
‘save thee when thou wast lost. Read the greatness
‘of my Affection for thee, and the Zeal of my
‘Heart for thy Salvation, in the Pains and Ago-
‘nies I submitted to undergo for thy Sake, in
‘order to reconcile thee to God, and restore thee
‘to the Divine Favour, in which all thy Happi-
‘ness is bound up. And wilt thou not give
‘me thine Heart, which I have purchased at so
‘dear

‘ dear a Rate, and at the Price of my own precious Blood ?’

Your pious Parents, your Ministers, and Teachers, only desire you to consider the Equity and Reasonableness of these Demands of God, and the Redeemer ; and endeavour to urge them upon you, with all the Tenderness and all the perswasive Force we can, from a thorough Conviction of the justness of them, and a solicitous Concern for your Welfare in both Worlds.

And now think, on the other Hand, what Pretensions the Devil, or the World, or the Flesh, have to lay Claim to your Hearts.—In Effect, none at all ; none that will bear even the slightest Examination of a thinking Mind.—Did they make you ?——No. Did they redeem you ?——No. Have you lived upon the Fruits of their Bounty, or been preserved by their vigilant Care over you ?——No. What have they done for you, or what can they do for you without God ?——They deceive, they ensnare, they corrupt, they defile you, they molest and trouble you ; but neither will nor can make you happy.—‘ And is it upon such Grounds
 ‘ as these that they lay Claim to my Love and
 ‘ Homage (should you say, not without Indignation ?) Will they presume to demand my
 ‘ Heart preferably to the Blessed God ?——What
 ‘ Madness must it be in me to admit such
 ‘ sorry Pretensions, and to resign my Heart to
 ‘ such shadowy Claims ! No, to thee, O blessed
 ‘ God

God! do I devote and consecrate myself; I acknowledge the Justice and Equity of thy Demands. I clearly perceive thy Right and Title to this Heart of mine; and to Thee, through Jesus Christ the great Redeemer that bought me with his precious Blood, do I here willingly and chearfully resign it. And had I more to give it should all be thine; for *of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all Things; and thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever, Amen.*— Depart from me therefore all ye wicked doers, I will keep the Commandments of my God. *His I am, and Him will I serve.*

I hope therefore, my young Friends, you are convinced that, in Point of right and just Claim to your Hearts, no one has or can possibly have Pretensions equal to those of the blessed God. And should you not *render unto God the Things that are indisputably God's?* Consider further,

II. *Where you may bestow your Hearts, i. e. yourselves, with the greatest Advantage.*

And here I acknowledge the World, and the Flesh, and such like Rivals, of the blessed God for your Affection, have a little more to say for themselves than under the former Head. Right and Title, they have none at all; And if they have fraudulently taken Possession of your Hearts, they should be treated as Usurpers, and turned out

out of their illegal Possessions.—But, however this be, they pretend that they will do mighty Things for you; and that it will be very much for your Interest and Advantage to be of their Side. ‘ You will enjoy a Life of Pleasure and Ease, free from the Restraints and Shackles of Religion. You will have an unbounded Liberty of Conduct, and *withhold your Eyes from no Joy*. Whereas the Services of Religion, say they, are irksome and melancholy, and hinder Men from rising in the World, and oftentimes expose them to a great deal of Suffering and Pain, which you may otherwise escape.’——These, and a great many other Things of a like Nature will be insinuated to you, to turn away your Hearts from God, and engage them to the Flesh, and the World. And sad Experience convinces us of the unhappy Effect of such Insinuations, upon the Generallity of younger Minds. They greedily swallow the tempting Bait, and perceive not the fatal Hook that is underneath. May Divine Grace preserve you, my dear young Friends, from being thus ensnared and taken!

And in order to your Preservation, let me desire your Attention to these two Things, which I would beg leave to offer to you upon this Head.

1. *First*—We will suppose at present that the World, and the Flesh, are able to make good their specious Promises.

This

This will not indeed be granted them (as we shall see presently,) but we are now to reason upon this Supposition; which is allowing them all the Advantage they can possibly desire. We will then, for a while, suppose that if you follow the Dictates of the World, and the Flesh, and pursue their Counsels before those of God and Religion, you will live in Ease and Pleasure all your Days, be rich and honourable, *be clothed in fine Linen, and fare sumptuously every Day*; and, in short, enjoy as much as your carnal Hearts can wish.——*Delightful Scenes!* you will say: Yes; but then, how long are they to last? Will they not soon be over and gone?——Human Life is circumscribed within very narrow Limits. Death will come and spread a dark Veil over all these Scenes of Pleasure, and make an eternal Separation between them and you, And what a Case are you then in! What is to become of your immortal Souls? You are to enter into another World, and to appear at the Bar of God, to give an Account of your Conduct, and to receive from his Lips a Sentence that will determine your everlasting State. And can you expect to hear, from the Mouth of your Judge, any other Sentence than, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into the Regions of eternal Misery?* Had you given me your Hearts, I would now have opened the Kingdom of Heaven to you, and given you a Portion in the everlasting Pleasures of it. But you chose to have your

'good Things in Life; now, therefore, reap the
'Fruits of your foolish Choice.'

And is it then worth while, my Friends, to purchase the short lived transitory Pleasures of Sin at so dear a Rate as this? Can you deliberately consent to give up your Part in the Felicities of Heaven, and to be miserable in Hell for ever, provided you may but enjoy some few Days or Years of sensual Pleasures here on Earth? Surely you cannot. And yet this is the very utmost of what the World, and the Flesh, can or do promise to bestow upon you. Only they labour to hide from you the frightful Consequences that are like to follow; which, however, it is not in their Power to prevent.

You have a lively Picture of the Case I have been speaking of, in the Parable of the *rich Man and Lazarus*, Luke xvi. 19, &c. There you see a rich Man *cloathed in Purple and fine Linen, and fareing sumptuously every Day.* — Well, but wait a little while, and you find he *dies and is buried*: — and there is a final End of all his Pleasures. — For the next Thing you hear of him is, that he is in *Hell, lifting up his Eyes in Torments, and begging for a Drop of Water to cool his enflamed Tongue*; and fixed down to those Regions of Sorrow for ever.

Methinks such a frightful Image as this, is enough to deter you from hearkening to the flattering Proposals of the World, and to make you reject them with Scorn and Indignation.

'Let

‘ Let a Life of Sense be ever so sweet, shall I
‘ chuse it, when I know Hell follows it? Or
‘ let a Life of Piety be ever so troublesome
‘ and difficult, yet the happy Consequences of
‘ it in a future State, render it far more Eligi-
‘ ble than the other.’ Who would not rather
be with *Lazarus*, begging his Bread at the rich
Man’s Door, and afterwards be carried by An-
gels into *Abraham’s Bosom*; than partake of all
the Dainties of the rich Man’s Table, and then
share in his dreadful Fate?

Thus then you see, that supposing the World,
and the Flesh, were able to make good to the
utmost all their flattering Promises to you, by
which they endeavour to beguile your Hearts,
and estrange them from God and Religion,
that even then it would be the greatest Madness
for you to bestow your Hearts on *them*, and
withhold them from God. *For the Wages of
Sin is Death, but the Gift of God is eternal Life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 23.*
But then,

2. *Secondly*, Even with Regard to this present
Life, the Advantage is far from being so much
on their Side, as they would make you believe.

On the contrary, I am firmly perswaded that
the Ways of Religion are Ways of Pleasantness,
as well as it’s End *Peace*. And except the Case of
Persecution (of which I shall speak presently) I am
satisfied that the Servants of God do, ordinarily,
lead easier and pleasanter Lives, than those that are

Strangers and Enemies to the Principles and Precepts of Religion. For, besides those Spiritual and divine Pleasures which arise, from the Intercourse of the Soul with God in Acts of Worship and Devotion, from the Testimony of an approving Conscience, and the Hopes of the Divine Approbation, and the Prospects of eternal Felicity in a future State (which whosoever hath experienced would not I dare say, exchange for all the Delights of the Sons of Men;) besides, I say, all the Pleasures and Comforts of this kind, which the Servants of God enjoy, there is nothing truly valuable or desirable, even in this Life, which they do not stand at least as fair to partake of, as any other Person whatsoever.

Is not Religion very friendly to the Health of our Bodies, and, generally, to our Reputation, and good Name in the World? Is it any Obstacle to Industry in your Callings, or to Success in the common Affairs, and Business in Life? *Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour. It is Health to the Navel, and Marrow to the Bones,* Prov. iii. 8, 16. *They that honour me,* says God, *I will honour,* 1 Sam. ii. 30. *The Blessing of the Lord, maketh Rich, and he addeth no Sorrow with it,* Prov. x. 22. And even as to those low Things, the Gratifications of sensual Appetite, we are indulged within the Bounds of Reason and Prudence; which is as far as any wise Man would ever desire.

The Insinuations therefore, that Religion will make you unhappy, are mere Calumnies that stand confuted by a thousand Experiences to the Contrary. We may eat our *Bread with Joy*, and drink our *Wine with a merry Heart*, if we can hope that *God accepteth our Works*, and that we are in a State of Peace and Friendship with him through *Jesus Christ*, Eccles. ix. 7.

It is, for the most Part, Sin that makes Men miserable; either their own Sin, or the Sin of others. How many Instances have you known of poor Creatures, that have sunk down into the most abject Circumstances in Life, been oppressed with Pains and Shame, Poverty and Nakedness, and gone about the Streets Spectacles of Horror and Wretchedness, purely through their own Vices and Wickedness. The World sets before your Eyes a few darling Images of external Pomp, and Show, and Grandure; but it labours to conceal from you the many miserable Creatures, that dye Martyrs in it's wretched Cause. And suffer me to inform you, that there is many a Man throughly miserable within, that makes a great and gay Show without. Could you see the Cares and Fears, the Disquietudes and Vexations that corrode his Breast, and prey continually upon his Heart, you would be very far from thinking him an Object of Envy, and would rather take him for an Object of Pity.

The Devil, the World, and the Flesh, promise you indeed Riches, Honours, and Abun-

dance of Pleasures; but they promise what it is not in their Power to give. Even these temporal enjoyments are dispensed by the over-ruling Providence of an Almighty God; and without his Leave you cannot enjoy the meanest Comfort. But if you give him your Hearts, and devote yourselves to him, he will certainly bestow as much of these Things upon you as his Infinite Wisdom knows to be best for you. And if he sees it fit to give you only a little of this World, *that little*, sweetened and sanctified by his Blessing, will be *better than the Treasures of many Wicked*, and yield you much more Satisfaction and Content, Psal. xxxvii. 16.

And then, under the various Troubles which human Life is exposed to, it must be evident that he that hath a God to go to, and to put his Hope and Trust in, and who by Faith and Prayer can cast all his Cares upon him; must be in a far happier Situation, than the Children of this World can possibly be. For what have they to support and comfort them under the Calamities of Life, or to whom can they look for Relief and Help?

And thus you see, that even with regard to the real Pleasures and Comforts of this Life, in the common and ordinary Course of Providence, the Advantage does not lie on the Side of Sin and the World, as they would persuade you; but rather on the side of Religion and Piety.

And

And if the Case of Persecution be objected, we have this to say ; that, Thanks be to God, this is not the common and universal Lot of good Men, at least not in any great or sore Degree : and if we are called out to it, we shall have Pleasures and Comforts of another kind, which will more than Ballance those we may be deprived of. *If our Sufferings for Christ should abound, our Consolations also shall abound through Him.* 2 Cor. i. 5. So that we shall be able to take joyfully the spoiling of our Goods, as the believing *Hebrews* did, Heb. x. 34. and even embrace a Stake for the Name of *Christ*, with more Transport and Satisfaction than others sit down to the richest Entertainments of Sense.

What I have here said is not a mere Flight of Fancy, but what the Experience of the glorious Army of Martyrs, for the Cause of *Christ* and true Religion, will abundantly support and justify.

To sum up what hath been said under this Head ;——You are supposed to be setting down, and enquiring where you may bestow your Hearts to the greatest Advantage to yourselves ; and particularly weighing and examining the specious Proposals of Sin and the World, in Opposition to those of God and Piety. And here you see, that if it be granted that you should enjoy the full of all that is promised of worldly Pleasures, and sensual Delights, that yet the End of these Things will be Destruction and eternal Death. Whereas the End and Issue of a Course

of

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of Deyotedness to God, however uncomfortable it be supposed at present, will most certainly be eternal Life.—And then further, it hath been shewn, that, according to the common and ordinary Course of Things, the Servants of Sin and the World are far from engrossing to themselves all the Pleasures and Comforts even of this present Life; the Advantage, upon the whole, lying greatly on the Side of Virtue and Religion. And since, therefore, (partly in this World, but most eminently and triumphantly in that which is to come) the Cause of Piety hath the Advantage, and you cannot but perceive that it hath so, you will be inexcusably foolish, and blind to your own Interest, if you do not give *your Hearts to God*.—And, in his Name, I again demand them for him, who has the justest Claim and Title to them; and to whom you may dispose of them with infinitely greater Advantage, than it is possible for you to do any where else. *Godliness is profitable for all Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation,* 1 Tim. iv. 8, 9.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

And now, my young Friends, since it is apparently both your Duty, and your Interest, to give your Hearts to God, as I hope you are convinced that it is from what hath been here said to you; suffer me to beseech you to act agreeably

agreeably to the present Conviction of your Minds: and now, even now, without Delay, to make a solemn Surrender of your Hearts into his Hands through *Jesus Christ* the great Mediator. Now, *in the Days of your Youth*, so remember your Creator, and Redeemer as to devote your Hearts, i. e. yourselves to them. And, in order to engage you so to do, let me desire your Attention to the few following Motives, additional to what has been above suggested.

1. This will be particularly acceptable to God, and the Redeemer.

I remember, saith God, concerning *Israel* of old, *the Kindness of thy Youth*, Jer. ii. 2. And *Wisdom*, in the Book of *Proverbs*, is introduced saying, *I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me*; Prov. viii. 17. They, of all others, shall be sure to do so. In the Case of the young Man that came enquiring *what he should do to inherit eternal Life*, the very Circumstance of his Youth seems to have had some Influence to draw out our blessed Saviour's Love to him; Mark. x. 21. *Then Jesus beholding him loved him*. Now, therefore, my young Friends, is the Season wherein the Surrendering your Hearts to God will be peculiarly pleasing to him. And therefore I beseech you embrace it; don't let slip the golden Opportunity.

And suffer me to add, under this Head, that, as at this Time of Day there are so few young Persons looking towards God, and seeking the
Way.

Way to the heavenly Zion, (the Pleasures and Interests of the World ingrossing their Hearts) so, if, in such a Situation, you would not follow a Multitude to do Evil, but chuse the almost forsaken Paths of Piety and Virtue, God will put a distinguishing Honour upon you, and embrace you with Marks of peculiar Affection, and Endearment. Moreover,

2. It will be singularly comfortable and advantageous to yourselves.

How many Sins, and how many Sorrows, will you hereby prevent! What a Foundation will you lay for the most happy Acquaintance with God, and joyful Communion with him all your Days! What a happy Proof will it afford you of your Sincerity, and of your consequent Acceptance with God, that, in early Life and when the Temptations of the World, and the Flesh were strongest, you deliberately chose the Service of God, and gave your Hearts to him, preferably to every other Competitor! How easy may you be in your own Minds, trusting in God to be the *Guide of your youth*, and to dispose of you into those Circumstances in Life which will, upon the whole, be best for you! With what Pleasure does *Obadiah* tell the Prophet *Elijah*, *I thy Servant fear the Lord from my Youth*! 1 Kings xviii. 12. And, if God spare your Lives, you are like to be qualified for eminent Usefulness in the World, according to the Places and Stations where Providence may cast your
Lot

Lot; or, if you dye sooner, you will be happily prepared to meet Death, and bid it Welcome.

3. If you refuse God your Hearts now, perhaps hereafter it will be too late to offer them.

Life, you know, is very uncertain; and young Persons dye, as well as old. And, whilst you are putting off, from Day to Day, your Attention to the great Affairs of Religion, and of making your Peace with God through *Jesus Christ*, by surrendering your Hearts to him; Death may unexpectedly surprise you, and prevent your ever doing it at all. And how terrible will that be!—But, if your Lives are continued, is it at all likely that you will have any better Inclinations to this Service, after you have estranged yourselves further from God? It will be very distinguishing Grace in God if it should be so.—Or how can you hope that he will be equally inclinable to accept you?—Since, therefore, you cannot reasonably depend on future Time, or, if you should live to see it, are like to be no better disposed towards God, or to have God more favourably inclined to you, but rather the Reverse; what a moving Consideration should this be to engage you to give your Hearts to God, even now, without Delay!

4. Consider what the Refusal of your Hearts to God implies in it.

You do, in effect, say, ‘ I dislike the Service of God; I disown his Title to me; I can place my Affections on better and more deserving

‘ving Objects; I desire to have nothing to do
 ‘with God.’——This is the plain Language
 of such a Conduct. And can you bear the
 Thought of adopting it for your own? And tho’
 you may, at the same Time, amuse yourselves
 with the Projects of bestowing your Hearts up-
 on God some while hence, this is only a mere
 Shift to pacify the Remonstrances of your Con-
 sciences; and, at the very best, amounts only to
 this; ‘I will dishonour God, and wound my
 ‘own Soul, yet a little longer; and after this
 ‘I will be sorry for what I have done, and beg
 ‘his Pardon.’——And if this be not acting
 contrary to all the Rules of Reason and com-
 mon Sense, it is hard to say what is so.

Lastly, Think how you will answer your
 Refusal at the great Day.

What can you possibly have to say for your-
 selves? It will not be a Time to turn off the
 Matter with a Jest and a Sneer, as some may
 do now. The solemn Appearance, and the awful
 Issues, of that Day will strike every Heart, that
 is not given to God, with Terror. You will
 not be able to say, your Hearts were not demand-
 ed for God; or that you was never put in
 Mind of his Claim to you. You know you
 have had repeated Admonitions on this Head;
 and that now, this Day in particular, your
 Hearts have been demanded for God, and the
 Redeemer.

Will

Will you be able to offer to the great Judge any sufficient Reason, or any tolerable Excuse, why you did not give him your Hearts? Had any one else a fairer Claim to them? or did they bid higher for your Love than God did? Did they offer you any Thing greater or better than eternal Life?—‘This I would now have bestowed upon you had you given your Hearts to me. But, since you have refused all my Calls and Proposals, depart from my Presence, ye Workers of Iniquity, I know ye not; lie down in the Sparks of your own kindling with Sorrow for ever.’—And can you bear the Thought of this?—Believe me, these are not idle Dreams, but certain and awful Truths. And you may assure yourselves that God will call you to Judgment.

May I hope that you are now affected with these Motives, and disposed and resolved, through the Strength of Divine Grace, to give your Hearts to God?—But because I am very desirous to fix your Hearts for him, and know not how to leave you without gaining my Point, (not knowing whether I shall ever have another Opportunity of speaking thus particularly to you about the Matter) let me address a Word or two to you, according to the various Circumstances and Situations you may be in. These I might diversify into a great many Particulars; but I will confine myself to speak briefly to the following.

1. Many of you have the Happiness of descending from Religious Parents, and have enjoyed the Benefit of a pious Education.

And shall not you give your Hearts to God? Has he proved a barren Wilderness to your Parents; or given them Cause to repent themselves that ever they entered into his Service? Had that been the Case, why are they so solicitous to engage you for God, and *travail again in birth till Christ be formed in you*? Why have they, some of them, upon their dying Beds bore an honourable Testimony for God, and with their latest Breath charged you to *know the God of your Parents, and to serve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind*? From whence may God most reasonably expect a Succession of Servants, but from the Families of those who were themselves devoted to him, and brought up their Household in his Faith and Fear? *And will you also go away?*—Will you cut off the entail of divine Blessings from your Descendants? Your Defection will be peculiarly resented by God. As, on the other Hand, the Tender of your Hearts to the God of your Fathers will be sure to meet with the most gracious Acceptance.

2. It may have been the Unhappiness of some of you to have had wicked and irreligious Parents, that have bestowed little or no Care or Pains to instruct you in the Principles of Piety and Virtue, and to engage your Hearts to God.

Much will such ungodly Parents have to answer for another Day. But do not you imagine that you will incur no Blame by walking in their Steps, especially when you are grown up to some Years of Maturity, and have, by some favourable Providence or other, an Opportunity of being better instructed. And if you find the Grace of God inclining you to attend to the Counsels of Religion, and to devote your Hearts to God, the Wickedness of your Parents shall be no Bar to your Acceptance; see *Isai. lvi. 6, 7.* God will receive and bless you through *Jesus Christ*, and adopt you into the Number of his Children; and may possibly make you an Instrument, in his Hands, of awakening serious Impressions on the Minds of your Parents themselves, and so of saving their Souls also. How pleasing the Thought! Thus the Curse of God, that is entailed on the Families of the Wicked, will be happily cut off in you, and a Line of Blessing succeed in its Room.

3. I trust some of you have already given your Hearts to God, and made an early Choice of him as your God in *Jesus Christ*,

To you, my Friends, I would say; Be very thankful for the Grace of God that hath given you this happy Turn and Disposition: and cleave with Purpose of Heart to the Lord all your Days. You see, from what hath been said, that you have made a wise Choice, and such as it is impossible you should ever have reason to repent of. But,

remember, it is not enough to begin well, but you must continue, and persevere in a Course of Piety and Devotedness to God. His Claims continue always in full force, and the Advantages and Rewards of his Service will be continually growing. If you leave *your first Love, and wickedly depart from God*, you will grievously provoke him, and wound your own Souls. *It would have been better for you never to have known the Way of Righteousness, than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto you,* 2 Pet. ii. 21.—In order to prevent your doing so let me give you this Piece of Advice. Do not satisfy yourselves with a mere sudden Flash of Affection, urging you to make some sort of Surrender of yourselves to God, and trust to that, as if this were alone sufficient to recommend you to him, and secure your final Salvation; as if the great Business of Religion was then done and over. But weigh the Matter calmly, deliberately, and frequently, in your own Minds; endeavour to get just Notions of God, and the Doctrines and Duties of Religion; for want of which, some, that seemed very piously disposed in their younger Days, have afterwards turned Apostates, or run into the grossest Errors or Mistakes, troubling the World, the Church, and themselves.

4. Some of you, I would hope, find yourselves disposed, in Consequence of what you have now heard, to surrender your Hearts to God.

And

And I beseech you, as you love your Souls, that you would not go about to suppress or divert the present Disposition, but fall in with it and yield your Hearts to God. Go, and humbly give to God the Hearts he Claims. Put them into the Hands of *Jesus Christ*, to be *purified, sanctified, illuminated, washed, and cleansed*; that they may become acceptable to God. Adore that Grace, which allows such poor Worms as we are to present our Hearts to God; and his condescending Goodness, which, in *Christ Jesus*, will graciously accept them. Why should you either demur, or delay, in so plain and so important a Case? Perhaps you may never have another Call from God, or another Invitation. Embrace therefore the present, and through *Jesus Christ* now yield yourselves to God, to be his, in the Bonds of an Everlasting Covenant. You know not what irreparable Mischief you may do yourselves if, like *Felix* touched and moved with the preaching of the Apostle *Paul*, you say to your Convictions, as he did to that Apostle, *go your Way for this Time, when I have a convenient Season I will call for you*, Acts xxiv. 25. *Now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation.*

Lastly, I suppose there may be others of you that, after all that hath been said, remain unmoved, indifferent to God, or averse to him.

But think, I beseech you, what is like to be the Issue of such a Temper. What! do you

care for none of these Things? Is it nothing to you what becomes of you for ever? Even your present worldly Interests are some Way concerned in the Affair under Consideration; and your future eternal Interests are much more so. Awake thou that sleepest, and rouse thyself out of thy shameful Indolence in a Matter that concerns thy Everlasting All!—But if you are not only meerly cold and indifferent to God, but even *averse* to him, this is still more shocking. What! *averse* to God, the Fountain of all Good, the Light, the Life, and Happiness of Souls! What a sad Complexion of Soul is this! And how terrible must the Issue be, if it be persisted in!—To whom will you give your Hearts, if you refuse them to God? You will one Day sorrowfully remember your present Stupidity, or Aversion, when either the Grace of God shall awaken you to Repentance, or the Flames of Hell convince you of your intolerable Folly and Madness.

I might now subjoin several particular Inferences, or Reflections, which would offer themselves to our Consideration upon this Subject; such as these that follow, which I shall just mention, but must not allow myself to enlarge on.

—The strange Degeneracy and Corruption of the Heart of Man, that can stand out against the plainest Reasons, and the strongest Motives.—For such undoubtedly are those which God uses to engage our Hearts to himself.

self. And yet how great a Part of Mankind, even of those that have these Reasons and Motives spread before them, remain still stupid and unimpressed?—

—The Necessity of Divine Grace to move and incline your Hearts aright, and to give them a holy and religious Turn and Disposition.—

—The Necessity and Importance of Prayer to God through *Jesus Christ*, for the needful Influences of his Grace and Spirit, to form our own Hearts, and those of others, to Piety and Goodness.—

—The Benefit and Advantage of suitable Admonitions and Instructions, in the Days of our Youth, to check the Vanity of our Minds, and to guard them against the flattering Insinuations of the World, and the Flesh; and to put us in Mind of the Claims which God and the Redeemer have to our Hearts, and the unspeakably greater Happiness we shall have in disposing of ourselves to them, than we can possibly expect any where else.—

These, and several other Reflections, I might usefully insist on; which at present I have only mentioned, and must leave the Enlargement to your own Minds.

I shall conclude with a very moving Passage, taken from the Writings of the late Reverend and excellent Mr. *Howe*. It is at the Conclusion of his two Sermons on *yielding ourselves to God*. After having urged a great ma-

ny Considerations, and Motives to engage his Hearers to this Service, he thus finishes his Address:——‘ And were you now to give an Account where you have been to Day, and what you have been doing: If you say, you have been engaging this Day in a solemn Treaty with the Lord of Heaven and Earth, about yielding yourselves to him: and it be further asked; Well, and what was the Issue? Have you agreed? Must you, any of you, be obliged by the Truth of the Case to say, No; Astonishing Answer! What! hast thou been treating with the great God, the God of thy Life, and not agreed! What, Man! did he demand of thee any unreasonable Thing? —Only to yield myself.——Why, that was the most reasonable Thing in all the World.—— Wretched Creature! wither now wilt thou go? What wilt thou do with thyself? Where wilt thou lay thy hated Head?——But if you can say, *Blessed be God I gladly agreed to the Proposal; he gave me the Grace not to deny him;* ——Then may it be said, this was a good Days Work; and you will have Cause to bless God for this Day as long as you have a Day to live.’

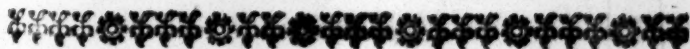


*The Consideration of God, as our Father
in Heaven, a powerful Engagement to
Early Religion.*

S E R M O N IX.

P R E A C H E D

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THE
DEDICATION.

To the younger Persons of the
SOCIETY to which I Minister.

My dear FRIENDS.

 HE following plain and practical Discourse, as it was at first composed for you, and in the preaching of it directed particularly to you, so to you also is it now thus publicly inscribed; that you may yet more particularly interest yourselves in it, and so (through the Blessing of God) may reap the greater Advantage from it.

IT is of the utmost Consequence to the interest of Religion in the World, that the younger Part of Mankind should be gained over to its Side; and therefore every honest and well meant Attempt to promote such a Design, will, I trust, be accepta-

The DEDICATION.

acceptable to God; and should be so to all good Men.

VARIOUS are the Considerations from whence a religious Life has been recommended to young Persons; but I do not remember that the particular Argument insisted on for this end in the ensuing Discourse (how often soever handled in a general Way, and for other Purposes) has yet ever been distinctly considered in this Light, or made Use of for this Purpose; though, if I mistake not, it is no less proper than any other whatsoever, and is in a Manner inclusive of all the rest.

I WRITE for you, my young Friends, and such as you; and if what is here offered be acceptable and useful to you, I have my End. I recommend you to the blessing of God our heavenly Father, and am

3 NO 63

Your most affectionate Friend

and Servant,

*Chestnut, June
19, 1732.*

J. Oakes.



MAT. vi. 9.

The middle Clause of the Verse.

—Our Father which art in Heaven.



IN order to engage young Persons to yield themselves to God, and to fix them betimes in a religious Course of Life (which is the special Purpose of our meeting together this Day) I apprehend it to be of the last Consequence, that they should be taught to entertain *good Thoughts* of God. For ordinarily such as are our Notions of *God*, such also will be our Apprehensions of *Religion*; which has God for its Object, his Will for its Rule, and his Glory, in Connexion with our own Happiness, as its End. In order therefore to lead young Persons into such *good Thoughts* of God, and to engage them to the Practice of that willing and chearful Obedience, which such Thoughts are fitted to produce, I could think of nothing more

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pro-

proper for them to direct their Conceptions of God by, than the Account which our blessed Saviour gives of God in the Text, as *our Father which is in Heaven*; a Relation, which imports indeed the *supreme Authority* of God over us, but shews us at the same Time that that Authority is mingled with, and directed by, the *tendrest Love and Kindness* to us; and so serves at once to beget in us a correspondent Love towards God, and to lay a proper Foundation for our Obedience to him. My Design therefore, in the Choice of this Passage of Scripture now read to you, is to lead my younger Friends into the Love of God, and the early Practice of Religion, from the Consideration of this paternal Relation wherein the great God stands to them. And I pray God our heavenly Father to follow with his Blessing what shall be said upon this Subject agreeable to his Will!

You easily perceive that it is not at all necessary, to my present Purpose, to enquire into the Context of this Place; my Design being, not to treat of Prayer in general, or of the Use and Design of the Lord's Prayer in special, much less to enter into any of the Controversies moved about it, but only to consider and represent (and that in as plain and Practical a Manner as I can) the Relation which God bears to us, *viz.* that of a *Father which is in Heaven*. Our Saviour taught his Disciples to direct their Prayers to God, as cloathed with this Character; and

and though doubtless it is peculiarly fit and encouraging to us in all our Addresses to God, either for the good Things we want, or the removal of such Evils which we either feel or fear, to consider God as our *Father*; yet it is also most reasonable and useful, that such Apprehensions of the divine Being should at all Times possess our Minds, and run through the whole of Life: and young Persons particularly should be led betimes to conceive of God in this Manner, that they may be induced to regard him in early Life, not only as the greatest, but as the best and most amiable of all Beings; and may always think of God as of one who is worthy, not of their Fear and Reverence only, but also of their highest Love and Delight.

In discoursing on this Subject, I shall observe this plain and easy Method.—*First*, I will give you some Account of the Relation in which the great God stands to us; He is *our Father which is in Heaven*:—and then,—*Secondly*, I will endeavour to improve the Consideration of this paternal Relation of God to us, as *a most powerful Argument to Religion and a holy Life*.—And when I have gone over these two Particulars, I shall conclude with a few Things, by Way of *Application*, that may be suitable to the Subject, and the present Occasion.

I. *First* of all then, we are to give you some Account of the Relation in which the great

God stands to us; He is *our Father which is in Heaven*. For the Explication of this, it will be necessary to enquire—in *what Respects God is our Father*;—and what is the import and meaning of the Phrase added, *which art in Heaven*. Let us then

First, Enquire in what Respects God is said to be *our Father*. Now according to the Scripture Account of this Matter, God is called our Father in such Respects as these.

1. He is eminently our Father by *Creation*. *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?* says the Prophet Mal. ii. 10. *O Lord thou art our Father; we are the Clay, and thou our Potter, and we are all the Work of thy Hand*, Isa. lxiv. 8. *Know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that made us, and not we ourselves*, Psal. c. 3. In this large and extensive Sense he is *the Father, of whom are all Things*, 1 Cor. viii. 6. the Father of all the Creatures in the universe, animate and inanimate; as by him all Things were made, which are in Heaven, or Earth, in Air, or Sea, or any where throughout the boundless Realms of Space.—Particularly, he is the Father of all reasonable and intelligent Beings, whom he has formed into some resemblance to himself, *the great Parent of Spirits*, by the noble Endowments of Reason, Understanding, and Will; and made capable

pable of contemplating his Works, of loving and serving their almighty Maker, and rejoicing in his everlasting Favour.

He is the Father of us Men; the former of our *Bodies*, which are his Workmanship (and which indeed bear the Stamps and Impresses of his Hand, in their curious Frame and Make,) but he is more eminently *the Father of our Spirits*. So he is expressly called, Heb. xii. 9. and *the God of the Spirits of all Flesh*, Numb. xxvii. 16. And it is with a peculiar Respect to this nobler Part of our Composition, that Mankind are called *the Offspring of God*, Acts xvii. 28. 29. But,

2. God is our Father not only by Creation, but by *Providence*. He acts the Part of a Father by us, and exercises a paternal Care over us; he supplies our Wants, pities and relieves us under our Troubles and Distresses; watches over us by Night, and by Day, and delivers us from innumerable Dangers; and in all Regards fulfils the Office of a Father in his kind and tender Conduct towards us. In this Sense *Job* says of himself that *he was a Father to the Poor*, Job xxix. 16. and Ch. xxxi. 18. *i. e.* he assisted and relieved them, he took their Part, and was ever kind and compassionate towards them. So our Heavenly Father takes Care of us, gives us Bread to eat, and Raiment to put on, and Places where to lay our Heads; and is continually doing us good, for Soul and Body,

for Time and for Eternity. You and all Creatures live upon his Bounty, are every Day feeling the happy Effects and Influences of it. This Doctrine of God's Providence over his Creatures, and over Man in particular, is represented, with great Advantage and Elegance, in many Places of holy Writ and is particularly inculcated by our blessed Saviour, with inimitable Force and Beauty, in the 6th Chapter of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, from the 25th Verse to the End; where you may observe that God is frequently, and with great propriety, introduced under the Character of an *heavenly Father*. Farther,

3. God is in a particular Manner the Father of us Christians by *Redemption*. By Virtue of his *redeeming* the Children of *Israel* from *Egypt*, the House of Bondage, God assumed the Character of a *Father* to that People in a peculiar Sense; and they gloried in this Relation of God to them. *Is he not thy Father that bought thee?* says *Moses* to the *Jews*, upbraiding them for their perverse and undutiful Carriage to God, their great Patron and Benefactor, Deut. xxxii. 6. and God himself says, *I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my First-born*, Jer. xxxi. 9. and the Prophet *Isaiah* thus addresses God in the Name of that People; *Doubtless, O Lord, thou art our Father, our Redeemer, thy Name is from everlasting*, Isa. lxiii. 16. and so the *Jews* say to our Saviour, *We have one Father, even God*, John viii. 41. But by the
more

more glorious Act of *Redeeming* both *Jews* and *Gentiles* by Jesus Christ, from a State of spiritual Bondage and Misery, God is become the *Father* of both; even of all those, who, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, embrace the Christian Dispensation, and profess Faith in Jesus Christ. The Christian Religion enters us into a new Relation to God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, in and through him, as our God and Father. *Ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Jesus Christ*, says the Apostle Paul to the *Galatians*, Gal. iii. 26. *I ascend*, says our blessed Saviour to his Disciples, John xx. 17. *unto my God, and your God; to my Father, and your Father*: and the Salutation of St. Paul, in the beginning of his Epistles to the several Christian Churches he wrote to, always runs thus, *Grace, and Peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. So that in a large and general Sense God is the Father of all professing Christians, of all who are baptized into the Christian Faith, and profess themselves Disciples of Jesus Christ. But then I add,

4. That God is, in an especial and peculiar Sense, the Father of true Christians by *Regeneration*. These are, in the strictest and most valuable Sense, *the Children of God*; and towards these God exercises and expresses the most endeared Affection of a *Father*. As among the *Jews*, God bore the Character of a Father in common to the whole Nation, and in a political Sense they

they were all his Children, whether good or bad; though doubtless the distinguishing Affection of a Father, and the saving Influences of his paternal Love, were restrained to such only among them who were truly religious: so, I apprehend though God is in some Sort the common Father of all professing Christians, of all that wear the Christian Name; yet that he is so in the most proper Sense, and to saving Purposes, only to those who are Christians indeed as well as in Name; who truly believe in Jesus Christ, and are born of the holy Spirit; that is in other Words, who are truly pious and good. *To as many as received him (Christ) to them gave he Power (or Right and Privilege) to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name; which were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God.* See *John* i. 12, 13. Regenerate and good Christians are the truest, and in some Sense, the only Sons of God; to these God their Father has imparted a new and divine Nature, and to these he therefore bears a special and peculiar Affection, and is in the most distinguishing and appropriate Sense *their Father*. For,

5. And lastly, to all sincere and pious Christians God is a Father also by the Favour of *Adoption*. So we read of the *Adoption of Sons*, *Gal. iv* 5. and the *Adoption of Children*, *Eph. i* 5. Angels are the Sons of God by *Nature*; so was *Adam* in Innocence: but fallen Men have no
Way

Way to obtain this Privilege, but by the Grace of *Adoption*, whereby, upon their Repentance, Faith and Regeneration, they are admitted into the Dignity of Sonship to God, and into all the blessings and Privileges of that Estate. Particularly, *because they are thus Sons, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into their Hearts, enabling them to cry* (with child-like freedom) *Abba, Father*, Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 15. And he has provided for these his Sons *an Inheritance*, worthy of the Children of such a Father, *an Inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for them*, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

In such respects as these then is God our Father, according to the Scripture Account of this Matter; he is so by *Creation, Providence, Redemption, Regeneration, and Adoption*. We are now,

Secondly, To enquire also, what is the import and meaning of the Phrase added, *which art in Heaven*. Our Father *which art in Heaven*. Now this principally imports the *two* following Things.

1. This Phrase is designed to teach us. That *Heaven is the special Seat of our Father's Glory*, the Place of his peculiar Residence. *The Lord hath prepared his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all*, Psal. ciii. 19. You know

know God is in Scripture said to be, where he is pleased to *manifest* himself; and therefore since it is in Heaven that he *manifests* himself in the highest Degree, and with a constant and abiding Glory, it is there that he is said not to be only, but to dwell; and Heaven is frequently spoken of under the Term of his *dwelling-Place*. Not that you are to imagine the Divine Being is confined there, for he *filleth Heaven and Earth*, and universal Space; but Heaven is the Seat of his peculiar Glory: that is, as it were, *the Palace*, and *the royal Mansion* of the supreme King; there he is most gloriously present, and is surrounded with a bright Train of Courtiers and Ministers of his Kingdom, I mean the holy Angels; *thousand thousands of whom minister unto him, and ten thousand Times ten thousand stand before him*, Dan. vii. 10. And it seems to be a Dictate of Nature, and what is impressed upon our very Frame and Make, to lift up our Hands and our Eyes *Heaven-wards* when we would address ourselves to God. But further,

2. The Phrase *in Heaven*, or God's *being in Heaven*, denotes his *incomprehensible Excellency and Glory*; that he is as far exalted above us as the Heavens are above the Earth. *Our Father is a great God, and a great King above all Gods*; and is no less exalted above us in the Perfections of his Nature, and in Glory, bliss and Happiness, than he is in point of Situation and Residence. His Dominion is supreme and universal;

universal; his Understanding is infinite; and his tender Mercies run throughout all his Works. If you would therefore conceive of God in a Manner suitable to this Description of him, as being *in Heaven*, you must think of him, as *the greatest, the wisest, and the best* of all Beings: for that is the Scripture-Import of the Phrase under consideration; as will appear, if you will please to consult the Texts referred to at the Bottom of the Page. *

Having thus represented and explained to you the Relation in which the great God stands to us, *as our Father which is in Heaven*, I proceed now to the

II. *Second General Head of Discourse*; in which I shall endeavour (by God's Blessing) to improve the Consideration of this *paternal Relation* of God to us, as a most *powerful Argument* to Religion and a holy Life.—And I Desire that *my younger Friends* would be pleased to consider what shall be said upon this Head, as *particularly directed to them*; though I hope, it may be of some use to us all.

Now here we may observe, in the *general*; that since the Relation of a Father imports in it (as we have already hinted) Authority and Love;

* 2 Chron. xx. 6. Job xl. 8. Psal. ciii. 19. and cxv. 3. Psal. xi. 4. and xxxiii. 13, &c. Mat. v. 44, 45, 48. and Mat. vii. 11. and other Places.

Love; Authority over, and love to, their Children and Offspring; and since God our Heavenly Father most certainly has supreme Authority over us: and the kindest Affection and Good-Will to us; therefore we, on our Part, owe to him the most dutiful Submission, most ardent Love, and the most chearful and universal Obedience. And if we are not thus disposed towards God, we dont honour him as a Father in Heaven should be honoured, nor correspond, in our Temper and Conduct, to the paternal Relation he bears to us. But to be more particular.

Since God is *our Father*, and our Father *which is in Heaven*, i. e. not only dwelleth in Heaven, but is also the *greatest*, and the *wisest*, and the *best* of all Beings, (for that you have heard is the meaning of the Phrase) hence we infer the *Reasonableness* of Religion (or the Equity and Fitness of it) the *Beauty* of Religion, the *Pleasure*, the *Advantage*, and the *Necessity* of it. Concerning each of which I shall speak somewhat briefly, and then proceed to the *Application* of this Discourse.

1. We infer from hence the *Reasonableness* of Religion, or the Equity and Fitness of it. For what is it to be religious, but only to perform the Duty of Children towards our heavenly Father? To reverence and love the Author of our Beings, and the Fountain of all our Supplies? To submit to him, whose Authority over us is incontestably supreme? And to love him,
whose

whose Kindness towards us is inexpressibly tender? And what in all the World can be so reasonable and fit as this is? If to be dutiful to our earthly Parents, and the Fathers of our Flesh, be a Piece of natural Equity and Justice; (*Children obey your Parents in the Lord*, says the Apostle, *for this is right*; *δικαιον*, a Thing righteous and just, *Eph. vi. 1.*) and the contrary be on many Accounts unreasonable and perverse; how very equal and fitting a Thing must it be, that our Heavenly Parent, the Father of our Spirits, should have the Honour which his paternal Relation demands from us? *If I be a Father*, (says God to the *Jews*, *Mal. i. 6.*) or since I am a Father, and you yourselves own me so to be, *where is mine Honour?* ‘I appeal to your
 ‘ own Consciences, whether the Homage and
 ‘ Obedience I Claim from you, be any Thing
 ‘ more than what are due to me as your Fa-
 ‘ ther? And whether you are not therefore in-
 ‘ excusable in refusing to pay so just a Demand?’ And I persuade myself, my Friends, that your own Minds and Consciences must also condemn you, as acting contrary to all the Rules of Justice, Reason, and the Nature of Things, if you neglect and disregard your Father which is in Heaven; *i. e.* in other Words, if you are not religious. As somewhat a-kin to this, we infer,

2. The *Beauty* of Religion. It is a seemly and becoming Thing, and what looks beautiful and agreeable, to see Children respectfully ob-

servant of their Parents, and expressing, in their Conduct towards them, an affectionate Reverence for their Persons, and a ready Regard to their Will and Orders. But how much still more beautiful and lovely a Sight is it, to see the Children of the great God, the universal Parent, the supreme and most lovely Father of all Things, chearfully paying their dutiful Regards to him that made them, and maintains them, and is continually doing them Good? Whereas, on the contrary, it is a most unseemly and reproachful Thing, for the Children of such a Father to carry it irreverently and disrespectfully towards him, to shun his Company, treat his Orders with Contempt, and take no Manner of Care to please him. This is acting quite out of Character; breaking in upon the Harmony of the Creation, and throwing all Things into Confusion and Disorder; and must, in the Event, be attended with Consequences very unhappy. But,

3. We infer from the same Consideration the Pleasure of Religion. *The Ways of Wisdom*, or of true Religion, are *Ways of Pleasantness*, as Solomon observes, *Prov. iii. 17*. And indeed how can they be other than Pleasant, when to be religious is only to love and submit to the wisest and the best of all Beings; or (which is the same in the present Case) to pay the Duty of Children to our Father which is in Heaven? Do you think it is a very hard and irksome Task,
for

for a Child of a towardly and virtuous Disposition, to love and honour a wise and indulgent Parent; and to do what is agreeable to him? Is there not rather a mighty Pleasure attending such Obedience, and springing up from the regular and daily Practice of it? I appeal to you, my young Friends, whether you do not, many of you, feel that there is so? And therefore, as God your heavenly Father is both infinitely wiser in himself, and kinder to you, than any earthly Parents can pretend to be; so the Pleasure which you will find in loving and obeying God, and doing what is agreeable in his Sight, will be far superior to what the best of Children find in loving and obeying the best of Parents here on Earth. And though sometimes the Will of our Father may a little thwart our present Inclinations, and appear to Flesh and Sense somewhat hard and severe; yet when we sit down and think, that our Father's Will is always, and in all Cases, directed by unerring Wisdom and infinite Goodness; that he knows better what is good for us than we ourselves do; (for indeed we are but weak and ignorant Children) and that he has the Bowels of a Father, as well as the Authority; when, I say, we think of such Things as these, we shall with Pleasure conform ourselves to his Directions, and take all Things well at his Hand. And as Religion, in the general Notion of it, appears to be a pleasant and delightful Thing from the Consideration

suggested in the Text; so a View of the particular Branches and Instances of it, if I had Time to consider them, would make it still more evident that Pleasure inseparably attends it. *Ex. gr.* Prayer and Praise; Resignation and Dependance; Love and Devotedness; Converse with God in the Ordinances of Worship; Endeavours after Conformity to God here, and the everlasting Enjoyment of God above; how very pleasant must these and the several other Parts and Branches of true Religion be, when considered as Transactions with *our Father* which is in Heaven, and Expressions of *our Duty and Obedience* to him? But I go on to observe,

4. The *Advantage* of Religion or the many Benefits which flow from it. And very advantageous must that be, which has *the Promise both of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come*, as Religion has; 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. For by that Obedience to our Heavenly Father which Religion teaches us, (and which is indeed itself Religion) we shall draw down upon us, through Jesus Christ, the divine Favour and Blessing, which is inclusive of every Thing we can want or wish for, in both Worlds. The dutiful Children of such a Father can never want any Thing that is truly good for them. He that *feedeth the Ravens, and cloatheth the Lilies of the Field*, will he not much more feed and cloath his own Children? Their Father will also protect them, *encompassing them with his Favour as*
with

with an impenetrable Shield, and giving his Angels Charge concerning them, Psal. v. 12. and xci. 11. So that in all Circumstances and Events they may be easy and peaceful, they have nothing to fear; for he that ruleth all Things is *their Father*, and their Friend. Moreover the Children of God may come into their Father's Presence on all Occasions, may freely converse with him, and *cast all their Cares* upon his fatherly Wisdom and Goodness, *who careth for them*, and has promised to make *all Things work together for Good to them that love him*, Rom. viii. 28. And what a mighty happiness is it, in every afflictive Scene of Life, to be allowed the Privilege of coming to the Throne of Grace, and saying in the Name of Jesus, with filial Confidence, *my Father, help, and bless me!* In a Word, our heavenly Father *will never, no never, leave nor forsake* his obedient Children; but will *guide them by his Counsel* through this present World, and then *receive them to his Glory* in the other. For the Children of God, when dying may look up to Heaven, and with humble trust in the Mercy of God, through the Merits and Mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, may comfortably say, *Father, into thy Hands we commend our Spirits!* And their Father will surely receive them, and, by the Hand of his Angels, conduct them straight to *the Presence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy*. Not only so, but he will also raise up *their Bodies* too at the last

Day by Jesus Christ, (for the Children of God shall doubtless be the Children of the Resurrection) and will then instate their entire Persons in a Felicity worthy of a God to bestow, and which will be inconceivably great and everlasting. These, and ten thousand more, are the *Advantages* and Blessings which flow from Religion, and which God our heavenly Father will bestow upon all his dutiful and obedient Children. But,

5. Last Place, we infer from the Consideration suggested in the Text, the *Necessity* of Religion: by which I mean, that Religion is *necessary* in order to please God your heavenly Father, and that is *necessary* both to your present and future Happiness. Your everlasting *All* depends upon your pleasing God, and being accepted of him through Jesus Christ; he is able to save or to destroy, and that to the utmost; *in him you live, and move, and have your Being, and in him all your Springs are.* Before his Bar you and all Mankind must shortly stand, and receive a Sentence from his Mouth decisive of your everlasting State. The Smiles of his Face give Life and Happiness, his Frowns Destruction and Death. Now I say, that Religion, or the Fear and Love of God your heavenly Father, and a dutiful Regard to his Commandments, is of *absolute Necessity* to your being accepted of him. Your Father peremptorily insists upon this in his holy Word, as (if you know any Thing
of

of your Bibles) you cannot but know; and it seems also to be *necessary*, in the very Nature of Things, to qualify you for the complacential approbation of such a Father as God is. So that I cannot in the least encourage you to expect the Love and Favour of your heavenly Father, especially his everlasting Favour and Love, if you on your Part take no Care to honour and obey him. No! *the Children of Disobedience must expect to be the Children of Wrath.* You cannot in Reason suppose that the dutiful and undutiful should fare both alike. The Honour of your Father's Government, and the Welfare of his great Family the Universe, require that a Difference should be made between such different Persons; and that whilst the *Obedient* are blessed and rewarded of their Father; the *Disobedient* should be corrected and punished by him. In a Word therefore, you must obey and please God by a Life of Devotedness to him, and keeping his Commandments; or you must expect to feel your Father's Resentments in such a Manner as will be very terrible to you: for your Father is *a great God, and a great King above all Gods; his Name is holy and reverend,* and he will maintain his Authority, and punish severely the Children who lift up their Hands in Rebellion against him, and refuse to submit to his holy Laws. And do you not think in your Consciences, that Children undutiful to such a Father as God is, and continuing in their Disobedience and perverseness

verseness through Life, notwithstanding all their Father's Goodness towards them, and his many kind Attempts to reclaim and save them, by the Methods of Providence and the Means of Grace ; must you not, I say, in your own Consciences, think, that such undutiful Children are worthy to be beaten with many Stripes? and that in the last and great Day, when God shall pronounce a Sentence of Condemnation upon them, and bid them *depart, for ever depart* from his Presence ; that they will be *speechless*, and in their own Hearts give Suffrage to the Righteousness of the divine Sentence?

A P P L I C A T I O N.

And now, *my younger Friends*, I beseech you to consider what has been said as *particularly directed to you*, and designed for *your* Instruction, quickening, and Encouragement. I hope in some Measure you see, you feel, the *Reasonableness*, the *Beauty*, the *Pleasure*, the *Advantage*, the *Necessity* of Religion, from the Consideration suggested in the Text ; and I persuade myself that the more you turn the Matter over in your Thoughts, you will be so much the more thoroughly convinced of the Truth and Importance of the Reflections drawn from it. Let me then ask you ; can you *too soon* engage in the Practice of so *Reasonable*, so *Beautiful*, so *Pleasant*,
so

so *Advantageous*, and so absolutely *Necessary* a Thing as Religion is? You know you cannot.

Let me then exhort you, my dear young Friends, to review what has been said, and to apply it to yourselves. And give me leave to ground upon it some *Remarks by Way of Advice*, and a few farther *Expostulations* with you relating to this Subject, and I shall then conclude.

The *Advices*, which I would recommend to you, shall be only these *three*; which, as they have been hinted at in the Discourse itself, I need not much enlarge upon.

Adv. 1. In all your Thoughts of God, and Converse with him, never drop the Remembrance of the *paternal Relation* he stands in to you: still bear this upon your Minds, that the *God*, with whom you have to do, is *your Father*. The Consideration of this will qualify the *Terrors* of the Divine Majesty, and add sweetness to the Divine Mercy; and will be a most powerful Incitement to the Practice of universal Holiness, upon the surest and best Foundation. Suffer not a depraved Imagination to paint out God to your younger Minds as an *almighty Tyrant*; a cruel and arbitrary Governour of the World; a Being that delights in Acts of Severity, and in the Miseries of his Creatures. No! you greatly wrong the blessed God, and hurt yourselves, by framing such ill-favoured Conceptions of your Maker. He is indeed *Almighty*; but he is a *Father*. He is the *supreme*; but he is also
the

the *best* of all Beings. He is to be *feared*; but he is no less to be *loved* also. He is holy and *just*; but he is *merciful* too, and full of Benignity and Love to his Creatures. Banish therefore from your Minds all such Apprehensions of God as are frightful and distorted, and which make him such a Being as you cannot reasonably Love. Believe that God is your Father; and carry that Thought through all your Transactions with him. When you fall upon your Knees to worship God (as I hope none of you live without God, and without Prayer in the World) think it is *your Father* whom you are going to address, *your Father which is in Heaven*; and you are going to *ask your Father's Blessing*. Write upon your Bibles, *the Word of my Father which is in Heaven; a Letter sent to me from my heavenly Father, to teach me the Way to Heaven*. And so with Reference to all the Exercises of Devotion you engage in, let the Remembrance of God, as *your Father*, be ever present to your Minds; and, I trust, you will find very happy Influences and Effects flowing from it.

Adv. 2. Think of a *religious Life* in this (which is at once the truest and most amiable) View of it, as *a Course of Obedience to your heavenly Father*. Nothing will so effectually Reconcile your younger Minds both to the Precepts and the Prohibitions of Piety, as such a Consideration of them. In this Light, the Precepts of true Religion will carry all the Weight of
Divine

Divine Authority, tempered with parental Wisdom and Love. And what Heart can then reject the Force of them? Its Prohibitions (which gay and unthinking Youth are apt to look upon as so many Shackles to their Feet; and a grievous Infringment on their Liberties) these, will appear to be only wise and kind Restraints, which our Father lays upon us to prevent our hurting of ourselves. Our heavenly Father is too good in himself, and loves us too well, to tie us up from any Gratifications that are innocent and harmless; he would have his Children *pleased*: but then as he is a wise Father, he would not have us purchase Pleasure at the Expence of our Virtue, or the Peace of our Minds; nor indulge to any such Pleasure, as would rob us of far greater Ones. How should we love and honour a Father so wise and so kind!—But in the *third Place*.

Adv. 3. Let none of you satisfy yourselves with being the Children of God by Creation, Providence, and Redemption; but moreover earnestly endeavour and pray to become the Children of God by *Regeneration*, and *Adoption*. It is fit you should be taught (what you will find Reason to believe more and more as you grow up in the World) that the Race of Mankind have corrupted their Way: and by their Un-
dutifulness to God, and revolt from him, have lost much of his Image and Favour, which was the Happiness and the Glory of their Natures.

And

And that, though God is still a Father to the Children of Men, and particularly to Christians (upon the Accounts above mentioned) and does as such bear a sincere Desire to the Work of his Hands, and a fatherly Propensity to do them good; yet that in some Regards he is an *offended* and displeased Father; and continues such, till we penitently arise and return to him and our Duty by Jesus Christ; till we are *renewed in the Spirits of our Minds*, and restored to his Likeness by the Regeneration of the Holy Ghost. Then, and not before, does God become a Father to us, in the fullest and most important Sense; and we then become Heirs of that glorious Inheritance provided for the Children of God in Heaven. What I would then inculcate upon my young Friends is this, (and I would do it with a Vehemence and Earnestness in some Measure proportioned to the vast Importance of the Thing) that you would not rest satisfied till you are the Children of God, in the compleatest and most valuable Sense, by Faith in Jesus Christ, and the renovation of your Minds; till your Father's Image, well nigh defaced by Sin, be re-impresed upon your Souls by the holy Spirit; till you find somewhat within you, that at once renders you suitable to, and inspires you with the Hopes of the Inheritance of God's Children in Light and Glory above. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye are thus born again, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom*

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dom of God, John iii. 3. Go then and pray, my dear young Friends, earnestly pray, (and follow your Prayers with suitable Endeavours) pray that your *Father which is in Heaven* would be pleased to give you his Holy Spirit, to enlighten and renew your Souls, and form you into an happy Resemblance to the great Author of your Beings; that so you may be disposed and enabled to love and serve him here on Earth, and become meet to see his Face, and to sing his Praises in the heavenly World. Our blessed Saviour has given you the most encouraging Assurances, that can be, of the Acceptableness and Success of such Addresses to God; as you may see particularly in the 11th Chap. of *St. Luke*, ver. 9,——14. I will only recite at present the 13th Verse, which runs thus. “*If ye then, ye earthly Parents, being evil, or though ye should any of you be evil, i. e. of a morose and rugged Disposition, and void of that Gentleness and Goodness of Nature, which some are blessed with; if ye then, being thus evil, yet know how, i. e. are inclined, to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father, who is all Love and Benevolence, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*” And let me add too, that the sooner in Life you begin to make your humble and fervent Addresses to your heavenly Father, for these needful Aids of his Grace and Spirit, so much the more acceptable will your Requests be, and so much the greater

will be the Probability of happy Success. *I love them that love me*, says *Wisdom* in the Book of *Proverbs*, Chap. viii. Ver. 17. *and those that seek me early shall find me.*

For the Close of all,

Suffer me, my young Friends, to put the two following Questions to you, and to reason a little with you upon the Contents of them. The Questions I would propose are these:—What has been your past Disposition and Conduct towards God?—And what are your present Resolutions?—I beg leave to ask you,

Quest. 1. *What has been your past Disposition and Conduct towards God?*—Have you in early Life regarded God as your *Father in Heaven*, and paid to him the Duty resulting from such a Relation? Have you had upon your Minds deep and affecting Apprehensions of the Divine Majesty, Wisdom, and Goodness; and under the Influence of such Apprehensions, have you been formed to Adoration, Esteem, Love, and Obedience? Have you found yourselves betimes disposed to *feel after God*; and solicitously to enquire *where is God my Maker*, God my Father? Have you been used, in a serious Manner, to ask your Father's Blessing upon you by daily Prayer? And, in a Word, have you conscientiously obeyed your Father's Commandments, and made it the Business of your Lives to please him?

him? If this has been the Case; give Glory to God for the Influences of his Grace, which has given your Minds this happy turn; and go on loving and obeying God still more and more; and your heavenly Father will delight over you, to bless you and to do you Good, and will shortly bring you into his Presence, and make you for ever happy in his Love. *Keep yourselves in the Love of God, and be Followers of him as dear Children.*

But are there none among my younger Friends whose Conduct and Temper, with Regard to God and Religion, have been sadly different from this? Have none of you lived hitherto as *without God in the World?* following after Vanity and Trifles, to the neglect of the higher Ends you were made for? shunning the Divine Acquaintance, and being indifferent to the Divine Favour? not caring to think of God, or to converse with him, as if in Truth you had nothing to do with God, nor he with you; as if you had no *Father in Heaven*, and you neither were, nor desired to be, the *Children* of God?—If this be the Case; I must in Faithfulness say to you, *Shame and Confusion of Face* belong unto you; and you have acted a most unnatural and foolish Part. You have been regardless of the highest Authority; you have been to the last Degree ungrateful to the best of Beings, and your most bountiful Benefactor; and you have acted contrary to your truest Inter-

ests in both Worlds. Retire, I beseech you, and mourn in Secret over this your Disingenuity and Folly. Think with yourselves, ‘ Did my
 ‘ God, my Father in Heaven, deserve no better than this at my Hands; Could I find in
 ‘ my Heart to make no other Returns to him,
 ‘ for all his fatherly Care and Kindness towards
 ‘ me, but this Coldness and Neglect? ——— My
 ‘ Heart melteth within me at the Thought of
 ‘ my horrid Wickedness and Ingratitude!’ ———
 Then turn yourselves to God and say, ‘ O my
 ‘ Father! I have sinned against Heaven and in
 ‘ thy Sight, and am no more worthy to be called
 ‘ thy Child. Forgive, through Jesus Christ,
 ‘ all my Undutifulness to thee, and heal my Soul.
 ‘ I cannot be easy while my Father is displeased
 ‘ ed with me, nor till I have obtained Pardon
 ‘ at his Hands. I entreat thy Favour, O God,
 ‘ with my whole Heart. O cast me not away
 ‘ from thy Presence, but put me, even me also,
 ‘ so, among the Children! Allow me henceforth
 ‘ to say, *my Father!* And let me hope for a
 ‘ *Father’s Blessing* from thee, and a Portion
 ‘ among *thy Children* in Heaven!’ ——— But
 this brings me to consider and propose the *second* Question; which is this,

Quest. 2. *What are your present Resolutions with Respect to God and a Life of Religion;*
 As for my pious young Friends, and such as are already devoted to God, I think, I can answer for their Resolutions, and durst venture to
 say

say this is the Sense of their Souls. ‘ Lord, to
 ‘ *whom shall we go? thou hast the Words of eter-*
 ‘ *nal Life*; and we are resolved by thy Grace
 ‘ never to forsake thee, or thy Service.’—Go
 on, my dear Friends, and prosper, the Lord is
 with you; go on depending on your Father’s
 Bounty, delighting yourselves in his Love; and
 you shall shortly see his pleased Face in the hea-
 venly World.

But, methinks, I would fain engage some
 young Persons, that have never yet done it, to
 yield themselves this Day to God; and to enter
 (in]Dependence on Divine Grace) into the most
 serious and hearty Resolutions for God and Re-
 ligion.—Suffer me to reason the Matter a lit-
 tle with you, and to speak on God’s Behalf.—
 If you regard *Reason* and the fitness of Things;
 that, you have been told, is the same with Re-
 ligion. If you seek *Beauty*, and Order; it is
 here you must find it. If *Pleasure*, behold this
 is the purest and noblest Source of it. If the
 Prospect of *Advantage* would work upon you,
 this you have heard lies all on the Side of Re-
 ligion. Yea, moreover, that there is a *Necessity*, an
 absolute Necessity of your being Religious, or you
 are miserable for ever. And do none of these Things
 move you? Are you not yet willing and desi-
 rous that the Great God should be your Fa-
 ther; your Father in the most important and
 valuable Sense? Do you not know that you alto-
 gether depend on God, for Life, and Breath,

and all Things? Do you not need your Father's Blessing, in whom all your Springs are? Can you say, God has not done the Part of a Father by you? You know, you feel the contrary, Can you do better for yourselves, than your heavenly Father would do for you? Or direct your own Conduct with more Wisdom and Safety than God would do? Is it not quite unnatural to be void of Affection towards the great Author of your Beings, and the Fountain of all your Supplies? Is it no Honour, do you think, to be a Child of God? Or are you afraid of entering yourselves the Servants, and the Children of God? Alas! the dutiful Children of such a Father have nothing to Fear from him, but every good Thing to hope for at his Hands! How happily may the Children of God live under the Eye and Care of their Father? And how comfortably may they die into their Father's Hands to be transplanted into nobler Regions above? But alas! what can you do in an Hour of Sickness or of Death, (and, believe it, young as you are, you are not too young to be Sick and Die) what in all the World, I say, can you do in such an Hour of Distress, if you cannot look up to God through Jesus Christ, and say, *my Father*? And what will become of you in the other World, if your heavenly Father, who is Lord of all Things, be displeased with you, and refuse to receive you?

Nor

Nor let any of you say, I do indeed purpose to seek after God, and mind Religion in good Earnest some Time hence, but I cannot find in my Heart to begin yet a while. Suppose any of you were to go to an earthly Father, and to address him in some such Manner as this. ‘ I hope, Sir, you will excuse me, if I tell you I am determined to shew you no Regard at present ; I shall mind none of your Instructions, pay you no Love or Obedience yet a while ; but will slight all your Counsels, avoid your Company, and despise your Favours, till some Years hence, when I shall be further grown up in the World ; and then, perhaps, if Necessity shall oblige me to it, I may somewhat reverence and regard you.’ Would not such an Address be shockingly perverse and unaccountable ? And yet this in Effect you say to your Father in Heaven, when you talk of putting off Religion and all Regard to God, to some unknown distant Season. And do you not even tremble to think of treating the great and blessed God, in such a Manner as you durst not treat a Fellow-Worm ?—— Moreover, do you not know that your Breath is in your Nostrils, and every Breath you breathe may be your last ? And if you neglect Religion and the Care of your Souls in the Days of your Youth, it is a Thousand to one if ever you are prevailed upon to mind them in earnest afterwards. Most certain I am, that the Season of Youth is of all others

others *the most convenient* for the Purposes of Religion ; and, for any Thing you know to the contrary, it may be *the only Season* too. But if by the special Favour of God you should be recovered in latter Life, the very best Thing you can hope is this, to measure over again the Steps you now take with painful Repentance.

What say you then, my dear young Friends ? Will you suffer me to be the happy Instrument of prevailing with you this Day to enter into the most serious Resolutions of devoting yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, and becoming dutiful Children to the best of Fathers ? Methinks I know not how to take a Denial at your Hands. What shall I further say to Influence and persuade you ? I can assure you that God is most ready to receive and bless you thro' Jesus Christ ; and that it is (if I may so say) a kind of peculiar Pleasure to the blessed God, to hear the Voice of Children and young Persons crying to Heaven and saying with Reverence and Love, *our Father which art in Heaven ; be thou the Guide of our Youth !* And how agreeable early Piety is to our Lord Jesus Christ, you may judge from his Conduct toward Children here on Earth, and the Pleasure he expressed in the young Hosannas they raised to his Name, *Mat. xxi. 15. 16.* The holy Angels would rejoice over you, and become your Guardians now, and your everlasting Companions hereafter. Your Parents and religious Friends
would

would also share in the Joy. And (if that would be of any the least Signification in the Case) I might add, that you would give me the greatest Pleasure in all the World, to see you (by the Blessing of God) becoming religious under my Ministrations. But if after all you remain unimpressed and care for none of these Things; know that you have been warned; and believe it, this very Sermon, designed for your Conversion and Happiness, will witness against you in the Day of Judgment, and increase your Guilt and Misery.

But I *persuade myself better Things concerning you, my dear young Friends, even Things that accompany Salvation, though, knowing the Terrors of the Lord, I thus speak, if by any Means I might save some.* I flatter myself with Hopes that it will please God, of his abundant Mercy, so to bless my present Endeavours for the Good of your Souls, as shall be an happy Encouragement for me to go on, and annually minister to you, on some proper Day, if God give Life and Health.

Wherefore I turn myself to God, and conclude; saying,

‘ O Most blessed God! our Father which
 ‘ art in Heaven! Pour out of thy Holy Spirit
 ‘ upon all of us, and particularly upon the young-
 ‘ er Persons amongst us, to whom thy Servant
 ‘ has been this Day addressing. Season their
 ‘ tende

‘ tender Minds with a lively Sense of God and
‘ Religion ! May they firmly believe, affectio-
‘ nately meditate on, and chearfully Comport
‘ with, thy fatherly Authority over them, and
‘ Kindness towards them ! Let none of them
‘ remain Children of Disobedience and of
‘ Wrath ; but do thou form them to the Tem-
‘ per, and give them the Blessings of the Chil-
‘ dren of God ! May they honour and serve
‘ thee here on Earth ; and when thou think-
‘ est fit to remove them hence, do thou re-
‘ ceive them into the Mansions of thy Glory
‘ above ! And may we all of us be interested
‘ in the distinguishing Affection of our hea-
‘ venly Father ; bearing his Image, and doing
‘ his Will, that so we may at length be brought
‘ to the everlasting Enjoyment of our Father’s
‘ Love in Heaven, through Jesus Christ our
‘ Lord and Saviour.’ *Amen.*

3 NO 63





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